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孔明の帰国

横山光輝

希望コミックス　172

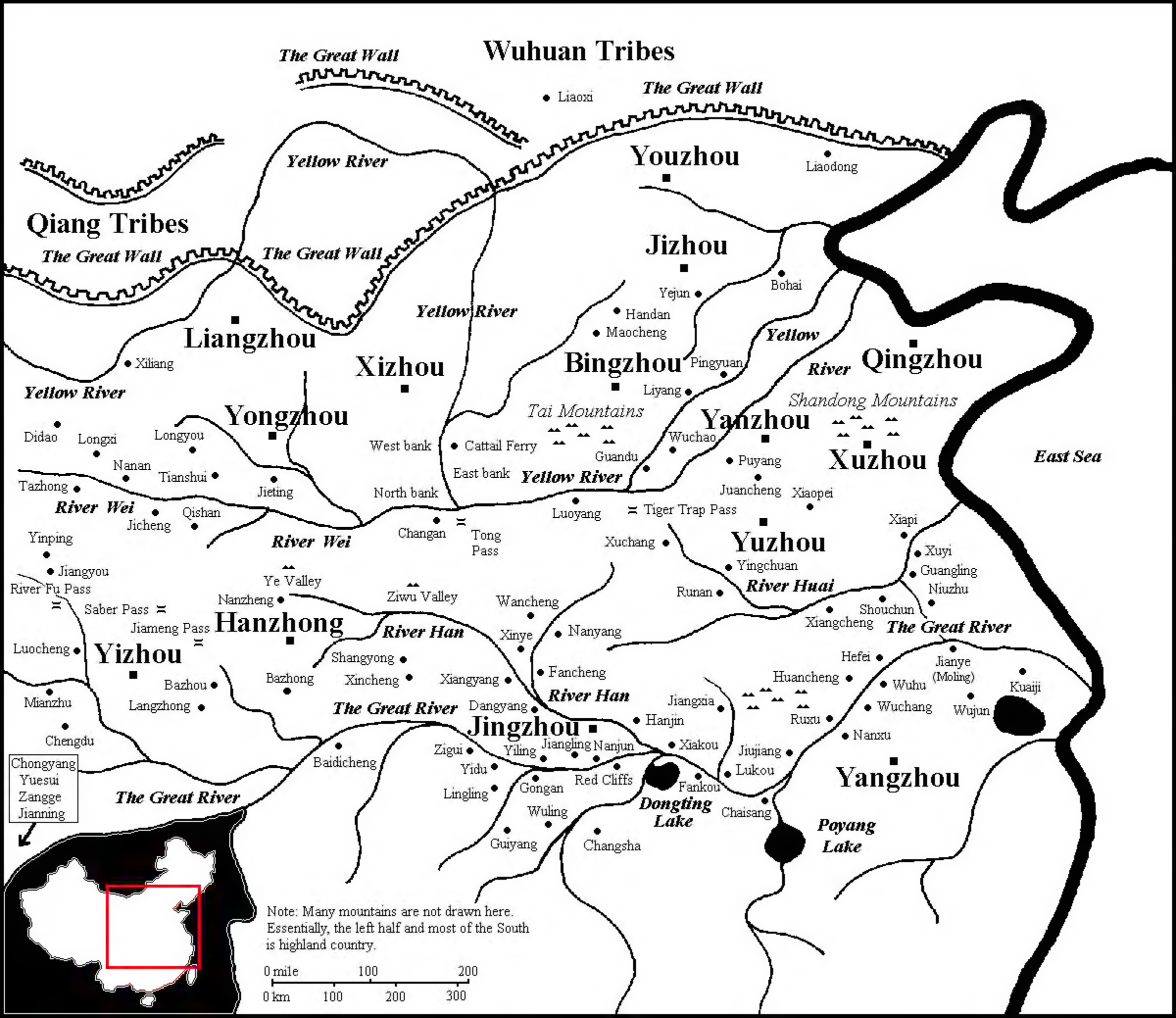
SANGOKUSHI

56

KONGMING'S RECALL

SIMA YI ZHONGDA

YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU


Wuhuan Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Liaoxi
Youzhou
Liaodong
Yellow River
Qiang Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Jizhou
Bohai
Yejun
Handan
Maocheng
Yellow River
Liangzhou
Xizhou
Bingzhou
Pingyuan
Yellow River
Qingzhou
Xiliang
Yellow River
Liyang
Shandong Mountains
Tai Mountains
Yongzhou
Yanzhou
Didao
Longxi
Longyou
West bank
Cattail Ferry
Wuchao
Guandu
Xuzhou
East Sea
Nanan
East bank
Yellow River
Puyang
Tianshui
Tazhong
Jieting
North bank
Juancheng
Xiaopei
River Wei
Qishan
Luoyang
Tiger Trap Pass
Jicheng
Changan
Tong Pass
Xiapi
Yuzhou
Yinping
River Wei
Xuchang
Xuyi
Jiangyou
Ye Valley
Yingchuan
Guangling
River Fu Pass
Ziwu Valley
Runan
River Huai
Niuzhu
Saber Pass
Nanzheng
Wancheng
Shouchun
Jiameng Pass
Hanzhong
River Han
Xinye
Nanyang
Xiangcheng
The Great River
Luocheng
Yizhou
Shangyong
Hefei
Jianye (Moling)
Fancheng
Huancheng
Bazhou
Bazhong
Xincheng
Xiangyang
Wuhu
Kuaiji
River Han
Jiangxia
Mianzhu
Langzhong
The Great River
Dangyang
Wuchang
Wujun
Ruxu
Hanjin
Jingzhou
Chengdu
Nanxu
Zigui
Yiling
Jiangling
Nanjun
Xiakou
Jiujiang
Baidicheng
Yidu
Lukou
Yangzhou
Chongyang
Yuesui
Zangge
Jianning
Red Cliffs
Fankou
Gongan
Lingling
Dongting Lake
Chaisang
Wuling
Poyang Lake
Guiyang
Changsha
The Great River
Note: Many mountains are not drawn here.
Essentially, the left half and most of the South
is highland country.
0 mile 100 200
0 km 100 200 300

MAJOR CHARACTERS OF SANGOKUSHI

CAI MAO:
FORMER GENERAL OF LIU BIAO, WHO BECAME THE SUPREME ADMIRAL OF WEI'S NAVY WHEN JINGZHOU SURRENDERED TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 25, HE IS FRAMED BY ZHOU YU'S PLOT AND THUS EXECUTED BY CAO CAO.

CAO CAO MENGDE:
THE AMBITIOUS AND MACHIAVELLIAN HERO OF SANGOKUSHI. RISES TO BECOME KING OF WEI BUT DECLINES TO BECOME EMPEROR HIMSELF. PASSES AWAY FROM ILLNESS IN VOLUME 42.

CAO HONG:
YOUNGER COUSIN OF CAO CAO AND NOW HIS LOYAL GENERAL.

CAO PI:
CAO CAO'S ELDEST SON WHO SUCCEEDS TO KING OF WEI AND DETHRONES LAST HAN EMPEROR TO BECOME THE FIRST WEI EMPEROR. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 49.

CAO RUI:
ELDEST SON OF CAO PI. SUCCEEDS AFTER HIS FATHER TO BECOME THE SECOND WEI EMPEROR.

CAO REN:
COUSIN OF CAO CAO AND NOW HIS LOYAL GENERAL. PORTRAYED AS BRAVE BUT HOT-TEMPERED IN THE STORY.

CHENG GONG:
A CITY GUARD CAPTAIN WHO ARRESTED CAO CAO, ONLY TO FREE AND ESCAPE WITH HIM AFTER SYMPATHIZING WITH HIS STORY. HOWEVER, HE LATER DEFECTS TO LU BU AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR. IN VOLUME 14, HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH LU BU.

CHENG YU:
IMPORTANT AND LOYAL STRATEGIST SERVING CAO CAO.

CHEN DENG:
THE SON OF CHEN GUI AND FORMERLY TAO QIAN OF XUZHOU'S SUBORDINATE. HE AND HIS FATHER SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL.

CHEN GUI:
FATHER OF CHEN DENG WHO SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL. DESPITE SECRETLY WORKING TOGETHER WITH LIU BEI AGAINST CAO CAO, CAO CAO SPARES HIS LIFE AND ALLOWS HIM TO CONTINUE LIVING IN XUZHOU.

DIAN WEI:
CAO CAO'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD, RENOWNED FOR HIS STRENGTH. HE IS ALSO KNOWN BY THE NICKNAME, "E LAI," IN REFERENCE TO THE GENERAL OF THE SAME NAME WHO SERVED UNDER KING ZHOU OF SHANG. IN VOLUME 12, HE WAS KILLED DURING ZHANG XIU'S PLOT TO KILL CAO CAO.

DIAO CHAN:
A MAID TO WANG YUN, WHO RAISED HER AS HIS OWN DAUGHTER. SHE AND WANG YUN PLOTTED TO DISTANCE LU BU FROM DONG ZHUO BY HAVING HER SEDUCE BOTH MEN. IN VOLUME 8, SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER ACCOMPLISHING HER GOAL.

DONG CHENG:
ELDER STATESMAN OF HAN WHO IS EMPEROR XIAN'S CONFIDANT. EMPEROR XIAN SECRETELY ASKS HIM TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO, WHO NOW RULES THE IMPERIAL COURT AS CHANCELLOR. IN VOLUME 17, HE IS EXECUTED AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION PLOT IS FOUND OUT BY CAO CAO.

DONG ZHUO:
GOVERNOR OF LIANGZHOU WHO LATER SEIZED CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND SEATED HIMSELF AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN, BECOMING AN INFAMOUS TYRANT. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, LU BU.

EMPRESS HE:
ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HER BEAUTY WAS NOTICED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS AND SHE ROSE TO BECOME THE EMPRESS, UTILIZING RUTHLESS MEANS. HOWEVER, SHE AND HER SON WERE REMOVED FROM POWER AND KILLED BY DONG ZHUO WHEN HE CAME TO POWER.

FA ZHENG:
FORMER SUBJECT OF LIU ZHANG, BUT DEFECTED TO LIU BEI DURING HIS CONQUEST OF SHU. HE IS ONE OF LIU BEI'S KEY STRATEGISTS.

GAN NING:
FORMER-PIRATE WHO IS NOW A FIRECE GENERAL OF WU.

GONGSUN ZAN:
GOVERNOR OF BEIPING, WHO WAGES WAR AGAINST YUAN SHAO FOR KILLING HIS YOUNG BROTHER. IN VOLUME 15, YUAN SHAO'S ARMY CONQUERS BEIPING, CAUSING GONGSUN ZAN TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

GUAN PING:
GUAN YU'S ADOPTED SON AS OF VOLUME 19. SERVES ALONGSIDE HIS FATHER UNTIL THEIR DEATH IN VOLUME 42.

GUAN XING:
GUAN YU'S SECOND SON, WHO BECOMES A PROMINENT SHU OFFICER AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH.

GUAN YU YUNCHANG:
SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER TO LIU BEI AND SWORN OLDER BROTHER TO ZHANG FEI. AFTER THE FAILED SIEGE ON FANCHENG, HE IS EVENTUALLY CAUGHT BY WU FORCES AND PROMPTLY EXECUTED IN VOLUME 42.

GUO JIA:
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO CAO CAO. HE DIES FROM ILLNESS DURING CAO CAO'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE YUAN FAMILY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

HE JIN:
ORIGINALLY A SIMPLE BUTCHER, HE BECAME A GENERAL WHEN HIS YOUNGER SISTER ROSE TO BECOME EMPRESS HE. HE IS KILLED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS DURING THEIR POWER STRUGGLE IN VOLUME 3.

HUANG GAI:
LOYAL GENERAL OF WU, WHOSE FAMILY HAS SERVED THE SUN FAMILY FOR THREE GENERATIONS.

HUANG ZHONG:
AN ELDERLY WARRIOR GENERAL RENOWNED ESPECIALLY FOR HIS SKILL WITH THE BOW. FORMERLY SERVED LIU BIAO AND HAN XUAN BUT DEFECTS TO LIU BEI IN VOLUME 28. FALLS IN BATTLE AGAINST WU FORCES IN VOLUME 43.

HUA XIN:
WEI MINISTER WHO RISES TO BECOME CHANCELLOR OF WEI UNDER CAO PI'S REIGN.

JIANG QIN:
GENERAL OF WU. FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH ZHOU TAI, BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR SUN CE'S FATHER, SUN JIAN.

JIANG WEI:
NATIVE OF JICHENG AND FAMED FOR BOTH HIS MENTAL AND MARTIAL PROWESS. ORIGINALLY SERVED WEI, BUT DEFECTED TO SHU IN VOLUME 51 AFTER KONGMING'S PLAN TURNED HIS WEI ALLIES AGAINST HIM.

JIA XU:
FORMER STRATEGIST OF ZHANG XIU, WHO PLOTTED A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON CAO CAO, WHICH LEFT DIAN WEI DEAD. AS OF VOLUME 16, HE HAS DEFECTED TO CAO CAO AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR.

LI DIAN:
SCHOLARLY GENERAL UNDER THE SERVICE OF CAO CAO.

LI RU:
CUNNING ADVISOR TO DONG ZHUO. WITH HIS ADVICE, DONG ZHUO FIRMLY SECURES HIS SEAT AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED ALONG WITH DONG ZHUO WHEN LU BU BETRAYS THEM.

LIU BIAO:
THE GOVERNOR OF JINGZHOU. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO SICKNESS IN VOLUME 22 AND THE CONSEQUENT SUCCESSION CRISIS ALLOWS CAO CAO TO TAKE OVER JINGZHOU.

LIU BEI XUANDE:
THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF SANGOKUSHI. A VIRTUOUS MAN, WHO CLAIMS DESCENT FROM EMPEROR JING OF HAN. HE HAS SWORN AN OATH OF BROTHERHOOD WITH GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI. HE BECOMES AN EMPEROR AND ESTABLISHES A SUCCESOR-DYNASTY TO HAN IN VOLUME 43.

LIU FENG:
LIU BEI'S ADOPTED SON. ORIGINALLY THE NEPHEW OF LIU MI, HE WAS ADOPTED UPON FIRST SIGHT BY LIU BEI WHO TOOK A LIKING TO HIM IN VOLUME 21. HE IS UNFORTUNATELY EXECUTED BY LIU BEI IN VOLUME 43 AFTER DENYING AID TO GUAN YU.

LIU QI:
ELDEST SON OF LIU BIAO WHO TEMPORARILY LOSES HIS INHERITANCE OF JINGZHOU DUE TO CAI MAO'S PLOT. IN VOLUME 29, HE PASSES AWAY FROM ILLNESS AND THE RIGHTFUL OWNERSHIP OF JINGZHOU CONTINUES TO BE DEBATED BETWEEN SUN QUAN AND LIU BEI.

LIU ZHANG:
INCOMPETENT RULER OF SHU (ALTERNATIVE NAME FOR YIZHOU). HE SEEKS LIU BEI'S HELP TO FEND OFF ZHANG LU, BUT RELATIONS SOON SOUR AND LIU BEI USURPS HIS RULE OVER SHU. AS OF VOLUME 35, HE IS EXILED TO JINGZHOU.

LU BU:
ALTHOUGH REPUTED TO BE THE STRONGEST WARRIOR, HE IS HOT-HEADED AND RARELY HEEDS WISE ADVICE. IN VOLUME 14, HE WAS BETRAYED BY HIS SUBORDINATES, AND EXECUTED BY CAO CAO.

LU MENG:
FIRECE WU GENERAL, WHO AT LAST CONQUERS JINGZHOU FOR SUN QUAN, CAPTURING GUAN YU IN DOING SO. UNFORTUNATELY DIES TO A SUDDEN ILLNESS AFTER GUAN YU'S EXECUTION IN VOLUME 42, CAUSING SOME TO THINK HE WAS CURSED.

LU SU:
IMPORTANT MILITARY GENERAL AND ADVISOR OF WU.

LU XUN:
TALENTED WU OFFICIAL WHO QUICKLY RISES TO FAVOUR AFTER SUCCESSFULLY PLANNING THE CONQUEST OF JINGZHOU.

MA CHAO:
ONE OF THE FIVE TIGER GENERALS OF SHU, WHO ONCE SOUGHT TO AVENGE HIS FATHER'S DEATH AT CAO CAO'S HANDS BEFORE ENTERING LIU BEI'S SERVICE IN VOLUME 35. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 49.

MA DAI:
A NEPHEW OF MA CHAO WHO ENTERS LIU BEI'S SERVICE ALONGSIDE HIS UNCLE.

MA LIANG:
AN ADVISOR TO LIU BEI. HE IS THE FOURTH YOUNGEST OF THE FIVE MA BROTHERS, AND IS NOTED FOR HIS INTELLECT AND WHITE EYEBROWS. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 46.

MA SU:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF MA LIANG, WHO, UPON REPORTING THE PASSING OF MA LIANG, CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF KONGMING AND ASSISTED THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGNS. HE HAS SINCE BECOME AN IMPORTANT STRATEGIST OF SHU.

MA TENG:
GOVERNOR OF XILIANG AND FATHER OF MA CHAO, WHO SIGNED THE BLOOD-PLEDGE TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 30, HE IS EXECUTED FOR A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT OF CAO CAO.

MENG DA:
FORMER SUBJECT OF LIU ZHANG WHO DEFECTS TO LIU BEI, ALONG WITH HIS GOOD FRIENDS ZHANG SONG AND FA ZHENG. HE LATER DEFECTS TO WEI IN VOLUME 43, AFTER REALIZING HE WOULD BE KILLED IN SHU TO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR GUAN YU'S DEATH.

MENG HUO:
KING OF THE NANMAN TRIBES, WHO UNSUCCESSFULLY SUPPORTED A REVOLT IN SOUTHERN SHU. KONGMING'S SOUTHERN CAMPAIGNS WERE LAUNCHED IN RETALIATION. AFTER BEING CAPTURED AND RELEASED 7 TIMES, HE SURRENDERS AND BECOMES A LOYAL SUBJECT TO SHU.

MI ZHU:
ONE OF LIU BEI'S ADVISORS.

PANG DE:
FIERCE GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED MA TENG AND THEN MA CHAO. IN VOLUME 36, HE DEFECTS TO CAO CAO'S SERVICE DUE TO A TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP WITH ZHANG LU, THE LORD OF HANZHONG. PERISHES IN THE BATTLE OF FANCHENG AGAINST GUAN YU IN VOLUME 41.

PANG TONG SHIYUAN:
NICKNAMED THE YOUNG PHOENIX (FENGCHU), HE IS A MASTERFUL STRATEGIST SAID TO BE ZHUGE LIANG'S EQUAL. AFTER ENTERING LIU BEI'S SERVICE, HE TRAGICALLY MET AN EARLY DEATH IN SHU WHEN AMBUSHED BY ZHANG REN IN VOLUME 34.

SIMA YI ZHONGDA:
IMPORTANT MILITARY STRATEGIST OF WEI SINCE CAO CAO'S REIGN. UPON CAO RUI'S SUCCESSION TO THE WEI THRONE, HE WAS BRIEFLY FRAMED FOR TREASON BY ZHUGE LIANG, BUT WAS RESTORED TO POWER IN LIGHT OF THE GROWING CRISIS OF ZHUGE LIANG'S NORTHERN CAMPAIGN AGAINST WEI.

SHUI JING:
HIS REAL NAME IS SIMA HUI BUT HE IS MORE COMMONLY KNOWN BY HIS TAOIST NAME, SHUI JING (MEANING WATER MIRROR). HE IS THE TEACHER OF ZHUGE LIANG, PANG TONG, AND XU SHU.

SUN CE:
ELDEST SON OF SUN JIAN, WHO TURNS THE SUN FAMILY'S FORTUNE AROUND WITH HIS CONQUEST OF THE SOUTH-LANDS. IN VOLUME 19, A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AND CONFLICT WITH YU JI CAUSES HIS BODY AND MENTAL HEALTH TO WEAKEN. HE SUCCUMBS TO DEATH SHORTLY AFTER.

SUN JIAN:
THE GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHA WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO. HOWEVER, HIS ALLIES LIU BIAO AND YUAN SHAO TO TURN ON HIM WHEN HE TRIES TO KEEP THE IMPERIAL SEAL FOR HIMSELF. IN VOLUME 7, HE IS KILLED IN BATTLE AGAINST YUAN SHAO.

SUN QIAN:
TRUSTED ADVISOR TO LIU BEI. (HIS ROLE IS MUCH SMALLER IN SANGOKUSHI COMPARED TO THE ORIGINAL NOVEL.)

SUN QUAN:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF SUN CE AND THE CURRENT RULER OF WU, THE SOUTHLANDS OF CHINA.

TAISHI CI:
GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED LIU YAO BUT DEFECTED TO SUN CE IN VOLUME 11. DURING THE BATTLE OF HEFEI (VOL. 29), HE FALLS PREY TO ZHANG LIAO'S PLAN AND IS KILLED IN BATTLE.

TAO QIAN:
THE KIND GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU WHO ACCIDENTALLY INVOKES CAO CAO'S WRATH WHEN HIS DISLOYAL SUBORDINATE ZHANG KAI KILLS CAO CAO'S FATHER, CAO SONG. UPON HIS DEATH, HE BEQUEATHS XUZHOU TO LIU BEI.

THE TEN ATTENDANTS:
A CORRUPT GROUP OF 10 EUNUCHS WHO WERE THE HIGHEST RANKING MINISTERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT. THEY WERE KILLED DURING THE POWER STRUGGLE WITH HE JIN IN VOLUME 4.

WANG YUN:
THE MINISTER OF THE MASSES, ONE OF THE 3 HIGHEST RANKING POSTS IN THE IMPERIAL COURT. HE SUCCESSFULLY PLOTS DONG ZHUO'S DOWNFALL USING DIAO CHAN IN VOLUME 8. HOWEVER, HE IS LATER KILLED BY REMNANTS OF DONG ZHUO'S ARMY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

WEI YAN:
GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED LIU BIAO AND HAN XUAN BUT HAS DEFECTED TO LIU BEI ALONG WITH HUANG ZHONG IN VOLUME 28.

WEN CHOU:
HE AND YANG LIANG ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 18, HE IS AMBUSHED BY CAO CAO'S ARMY AND KILLED BY GUAN YU.

XIAHOU DUN:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. HE LOST HIS LEFT EYE DURING A BATTLE AGAINST LU BU'S ARMY IN VOLUME 13.

XU CHU:
TRUSTED BODYGUARD OF CAO CAO. ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HE WAS RECRUITED BY CAO CAO WHO WAS IMPRESSED AFTER SEEING XU CHU'S DUEL WITH DIAN WEI.

XU SHU (SHAN FU):
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST WHO STUDIED UNDER SHUI JING. AFTER A BRIEF STINT OF SERVICE TO LIU BEI, HE IS TRICKED INTO COMING TO XUCHANG AND SERVING CAO CAO (VOLUME 21).

XUN YU:
TALENTED ADVISOR TO CA CAO.

XU HUANG:
CALM AND COLLECTED GENERAL UNDER SERVICE TO CAO CAO. CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE FIVE TOP GENERALS OF WEI BY CHEN SHOU, AUTHOR OF RECORDS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS.

YAN LIANG:
HE AND WEN CHOU ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 17, HE WAS KILLED BY GUAN YU WHILE FIGHTING CAO CAO'S ARMY AT BAIMA.

YAN YAN:
FORMER GENERAL OF LIU ZHANG BUT DEFECTED TO LIU BEI AFTER HIS CAPTURE AT ZHANG FEI'S HANDS IN VOLUME 34. HE IS NOTED FOR HIS ENERGY DESPITE HIS OLD AGE.

YU JIN:
GENERAL SERVING CAO CAO. CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE FIVE TOP GENERALS OF WEI BY CHEN SHOU, AUTHOR OF RECORDS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS.

YUAN SHAO:
OLDER BROTHER OF YUAN SHU AND THE GOVERNOR OF JIZHOU. AFTER MANY YEARS OF WARRING AGAINST CAO CAO FOR CONTROL OF NORTHERN CHINA, HE AND HIS FAMILY ARE DEFEATED.

YUAN SHU:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF YUAN SHAO AND THE GOVERNOR OF NANYANG. AFTER RECEIVING THE IMPERIAL SEAL FROM SUN CE, HE DECLARES HIMSELF AS THE EMPEROR OF ZHONG DYNASTY. IN VOLUME 15, HE DIES OF THIRST AFTER BEING ON THE RUN FROM LIU BEI AND CAO CAO'S ARMIES.

ZHANG BAO:
ELDEST SON OF ZHANG FEI, WHO RISES TO PROMINENCE AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER.

ZHANG FEI YIDE:
A FIRECE, SHORT-TEMPERED WARRIOR WHO IS THE SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER OF LIU BEI AND GUAN YU. HIS TEMPER EVENTUALLY GETS THE BETTER OF HIM, WHEN HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS SUBORDINATES IN VOLUME 43.

ZHANG LIAO:
ONE OF CAO CAO'S TOP GENERALS. HE WAS FORMERLY LU BU'S SUBORDINATE BUT DEFECTED TO CAO CAO AFTER THE FORMER'S EXECUTION.

ZHANG LU:
THE LEADER OF THE CELESTIAL MASTERS TAOIST MOVEMENT, AND THE RULER OF HANZHONG. IN VOLUME 36, CAO CAO CONQUERS HANZHONG BUT SPARES ZHANG LU.

ZHANG REN:
ONE OF SHU'S MOST CAPABLE GENERALS WHO PLANNED THE AMBUSH THAT KILLED PANG TONG. HE REFUSED TO SERVE LIU BEI UNLIKE MANY OF HIS COMRADES AND WAS THUS EXECUTED WHEN FINALLY CAPTURED AT THE HANDS OF ZHUGE LIANG (VOLUME 35).

ZHANG SONG:
AN ADVISOR TO LIU ZHANG WHO, UPON FAILING TO MAKE AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN CAO CAO AND LIU ZHANG, SOUGHT LIU BEI'S SUPPORT AND SWITCHED HIS ALLEGIANCE. IN VOLUME 34, HE IS EXECUTED WHEN HIS BROTHER REPORTS HIS BETRAYAL TO LIU ZHANG.

ZHANG XIU:
LORD OF WANCHENG WHO ATTEMPTED TO KILL CAO CAO DURING THE BATTLE OF WANCHENG IN VOLUME 12. AFTER YEARS OF CONFLICT AGAINST CAO CAO, HE FINALLY DECIDES TO DEFECT TO CAO CAO IN VOLUME 16.

ZHAO YUN ZILONG:
A FORMER SUBJECT OF YUAN SHAO BUT LATER DEFECTED TO SERVE GONGSUN ZAN. AFTER GONGSUN ZAN'S DEATH, HE BECOMES ONE OF LIU BEI'S MOST TRUSTED GENERALS.

ZHOU TAI:
GENERAL OF WU. FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH JIANG QIN BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR HIS FATHER, SUN JIAN.

ZHANG ZHAO:
ELDER STATESMAN AND SUN QUAN'S TRUSTED ADVISOR. HE ORIGINALLY ENTERED SUN CE'S SERVICE ALONG WITH ZHANG HONG, WITH WHOM HE WAS REFERRED TO AS THE "TWO ZHANGS."

ZHOU CANG:
FORMERLY A YELLOW TURBAN, HE MEETS GUAN YU IN VOLUME 18 AND BECOMES HIS SUBORDINATE. COMMITS SUICIDE AFTER LEARNING GUAN YU WAS EXECUTED IN VOLUME 42.

ZHOU YU GONGJIN:
SWORN BROTHER OF SUN CE, AND ONE OF WU'S TOP MINDS, SERVING AS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DURING THE BATTLE OF THE RED CLIFFS. HE RECEIVES A CRITICAL ARROW-WOUND DURING HIS NANJUN CAMPAIGN (VOL. 27) WHICH HE NEVER FULLY RECOVERS FROM, LEADING TO HIS TRAGIC EARLY DEATH IN VOLUME 30.

ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING:
MASTERFUL STRATEGIST AND FORMER STUDENT OF SHUI JING. IN VOLUME 21, HE YIELDS TO LIU BEI'S PERSISTENCE AND DECIDES TO BECOME HIS SUBJECT.

SANGOKUSHI (ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS)

三国志

VOLUME 56
KONGMING'S RECALL

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（『三国志』ボックストム掲載）

PHONY TROOPS

IS THAT SO?

IN THE JI GORGE, OUR TROOPS SUCCESSFULLY AMBUSHED A SHU FORCE OF 4000 TROOPS LED BY CHEN SHI.

YES, COMMANDER.

WELL, I'M AFRAID NOT A SINGLE SHU SOLDIER HAS APPEARED AROUND THESE PARTS. TELL SIMA YI IF I SEE NO ACTION FOR 2 MORE DAYS, I'LL WIN THE BET.

HAHA, I WONDER IF SIMA YI SENT THAT MESSENGER JUST TO SALVAGE HIS PRIDE IN CASE HE LOST THE BET. I HAVE MY DOUBTS WHETHER SHU TROOPS REALLY SHOWED UP AT THE JI GORGE...

*FLAGS READ QIN (秦) FOR QIN LIANG

OH, GOOD.

COMMANDER, GENERAL QIN LIANG'S TROOPS HAVE RETURNED.

秦

秦

THAT'S HIM! THE ENEMY COMMANDER CAO ZHEN!

WELCOME BACK, QIN LIANG.

WHAT IN THE WORLD...?

WHA?

RIGHT.

LET US DEAL WITH THE SITUATION! PLEASE WITHDRAW TO A SAFE LOCATION, SIR!

WHAT!? A MUTINY!?

AHH!

魏

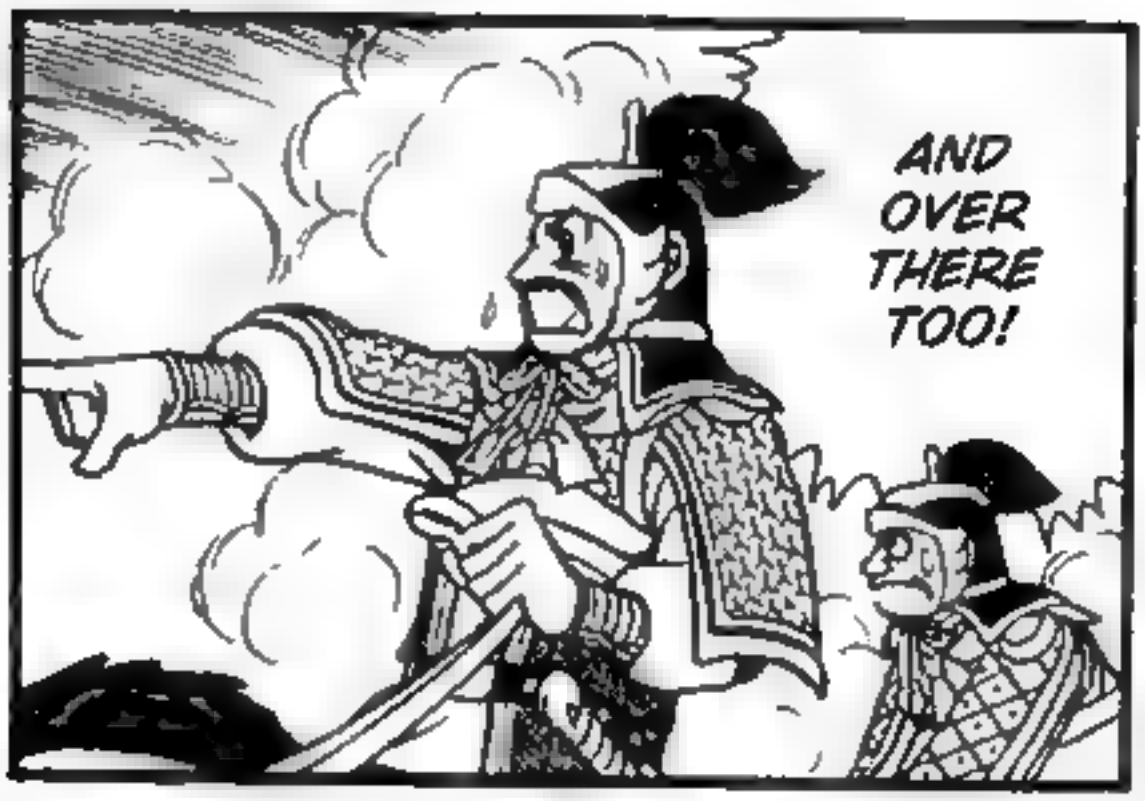
魏

MA DAI OF SHU!?

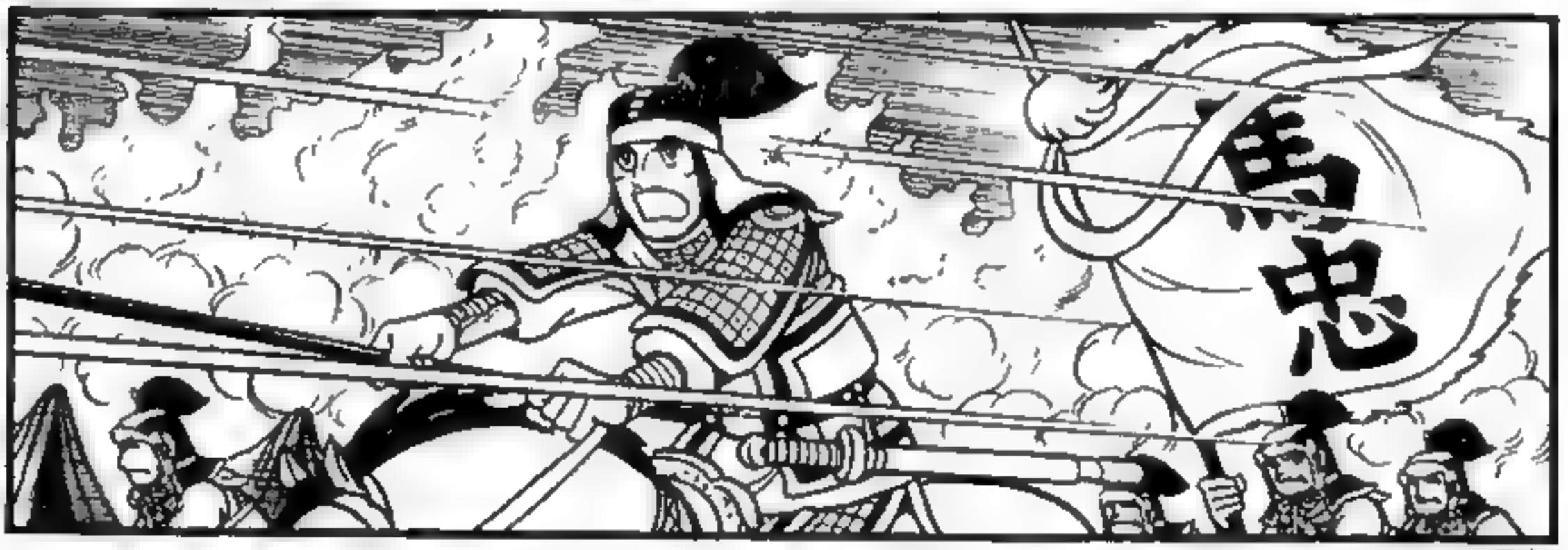
SIR! THIS WAY!

YES.

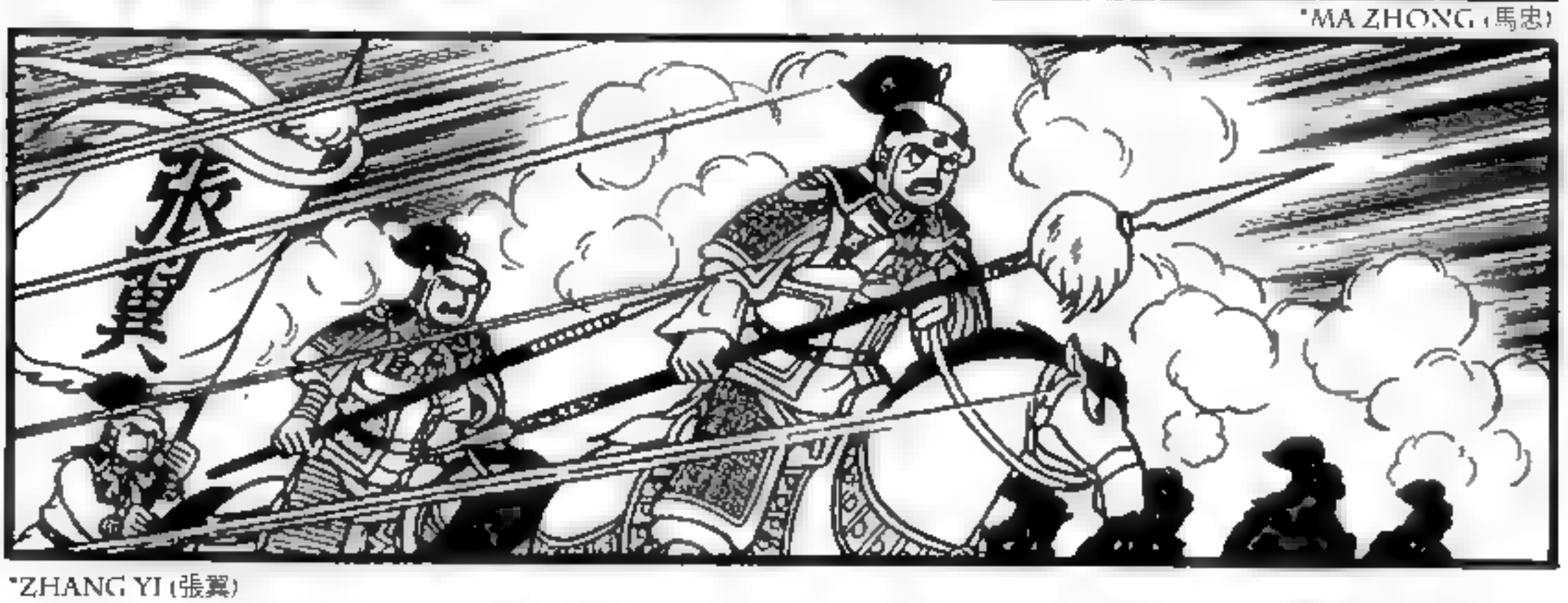
AHH!



*WANG PING (王平)

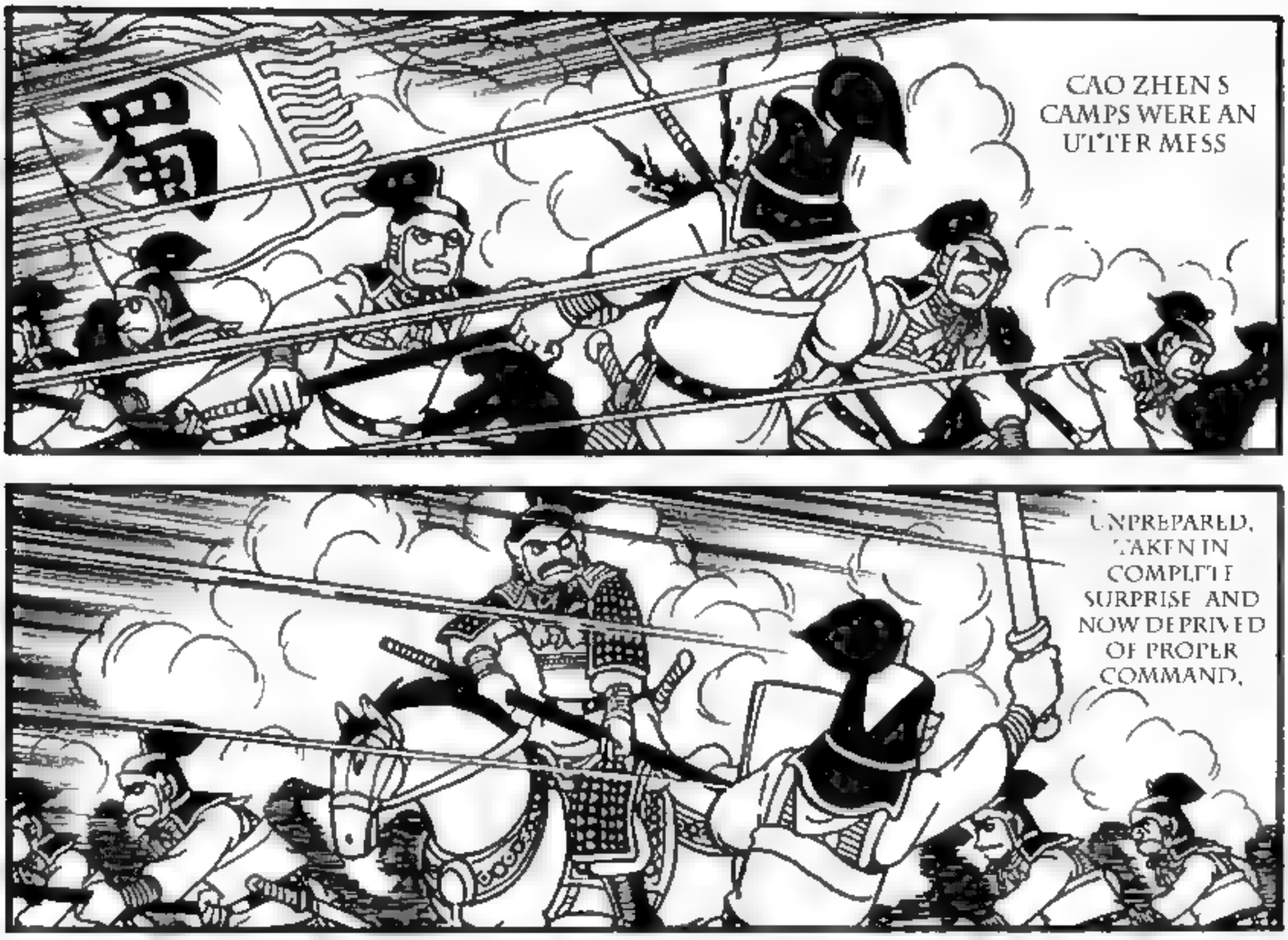


*MA ZHONG (馬忠)



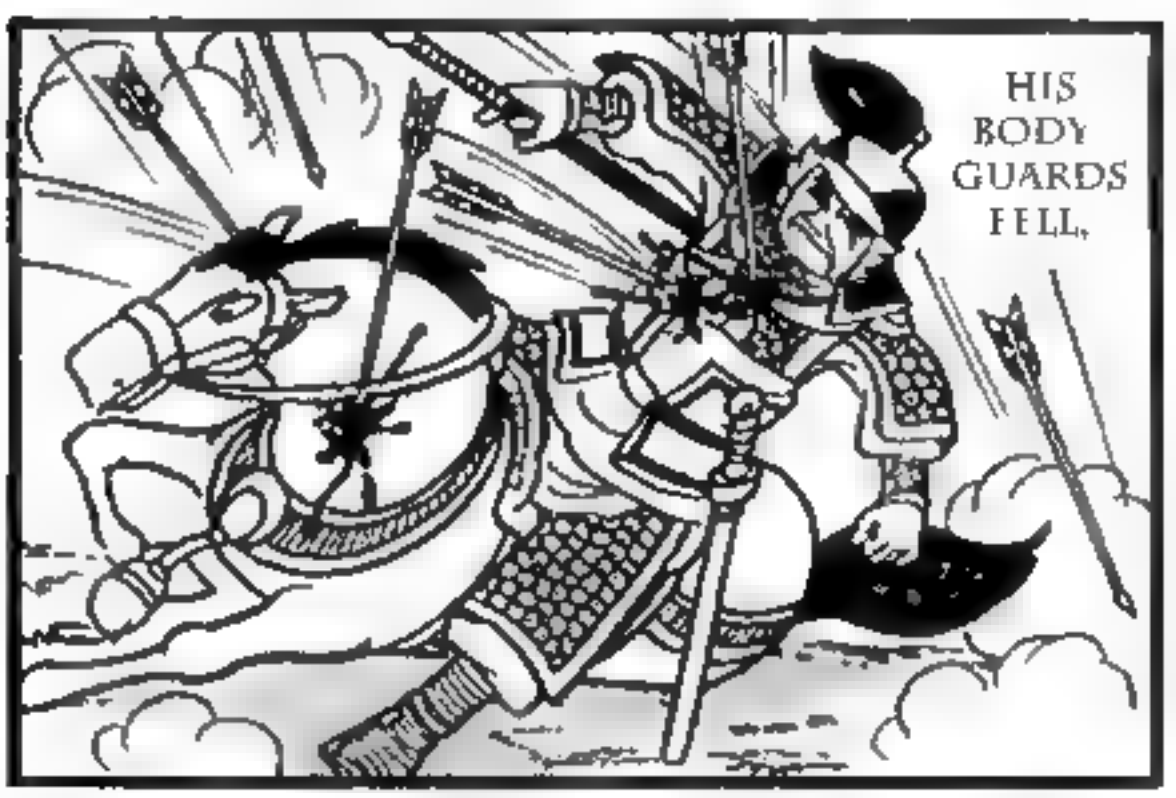
*ZHANG YI (張翼)

MN...
YOU MUST FIND A WAY TO ESCAPE, SIR!
WE'RE SURROUNDED BY SHU TROOPS ON ALL SIDES!

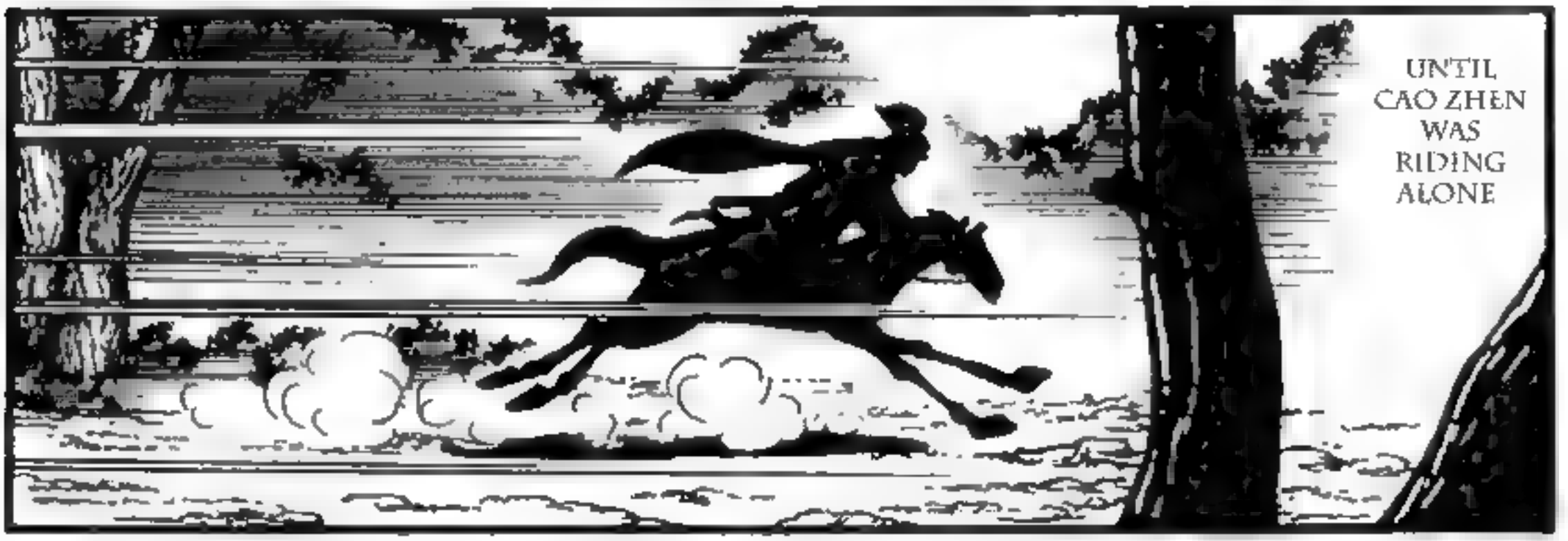

CAO ZHEN S CAMPS WERE AN UTTER MESS
UNPREPARED, TAKEN IN COMPLETE SURPRISE AND NOW DEPRIVED OF PROPER COMMAND,
THE WEI TROOPS COULD ONLY SCATTER IN PANIC AS THEY WERE BUTCHERED
DEF

IT MATTERED NOT AS ENEMY TROOPS FOUND HIM NO MATTER WHERE HE WENT

IN GREAT PANIC, CAO ZHEN WAS NOT EVEN AWARE WHICH WAY HE WAS FLEEING TO

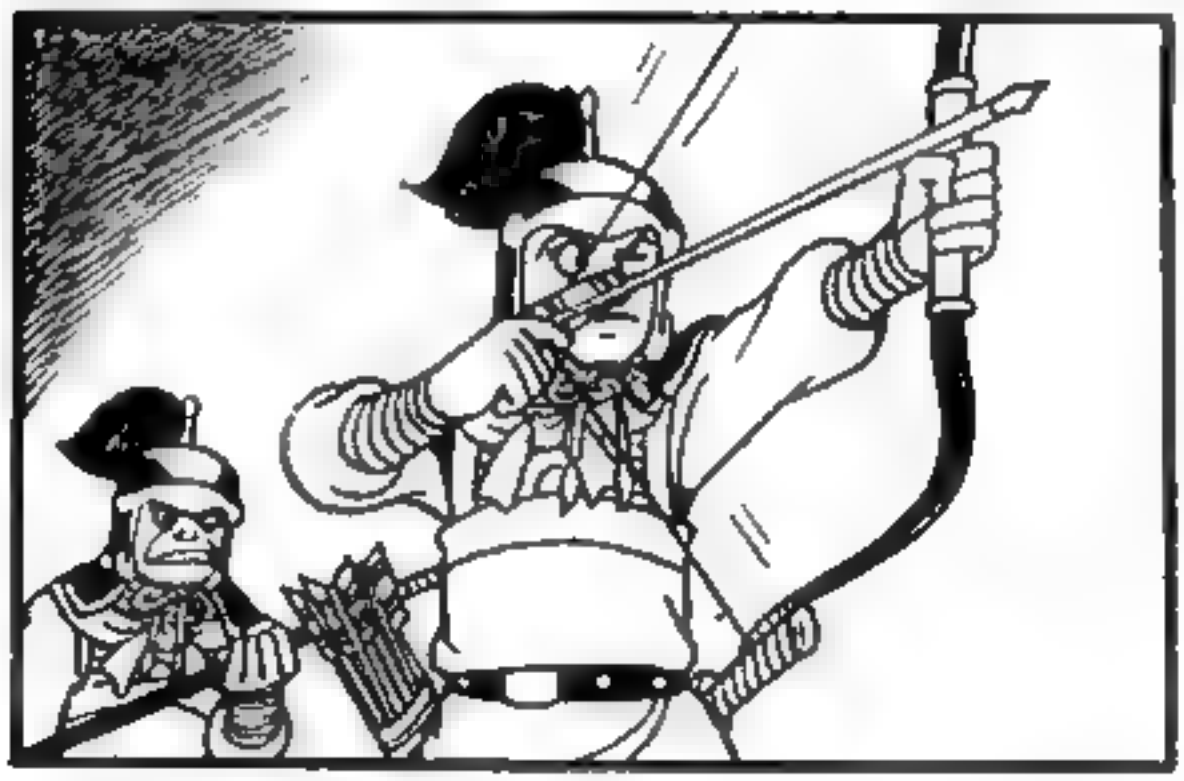

HIS BODY GUARDS FELL,

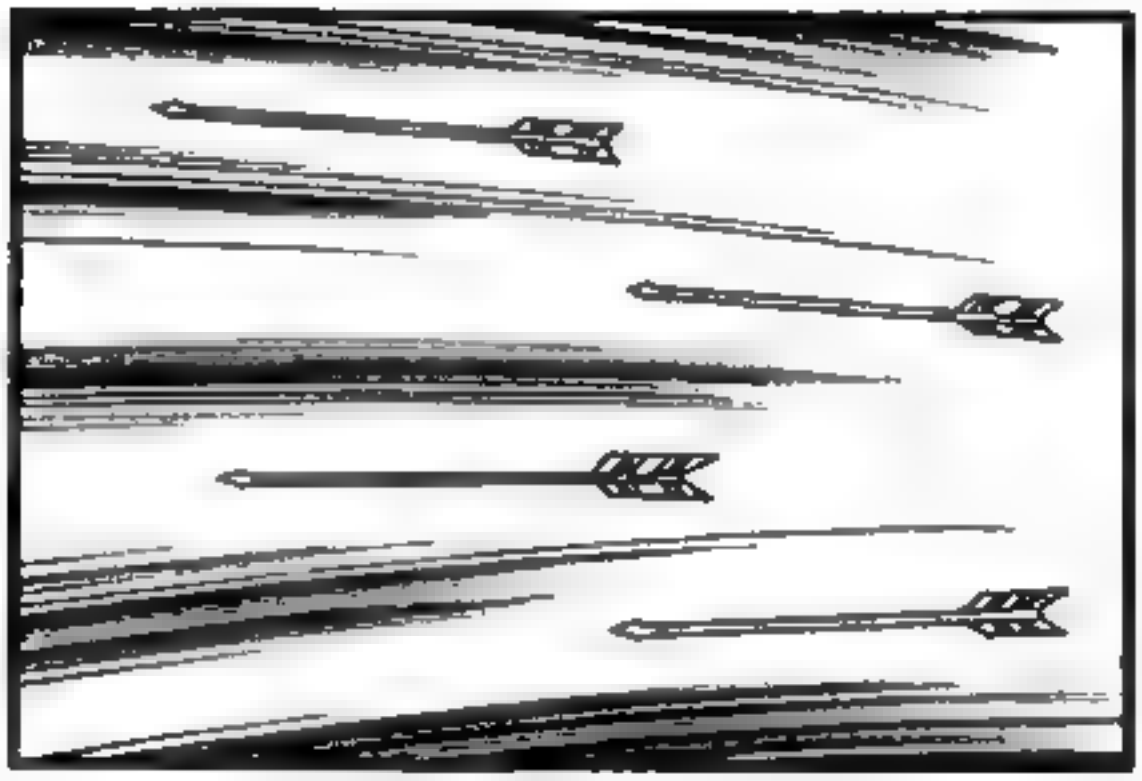
ONE BY ONE,

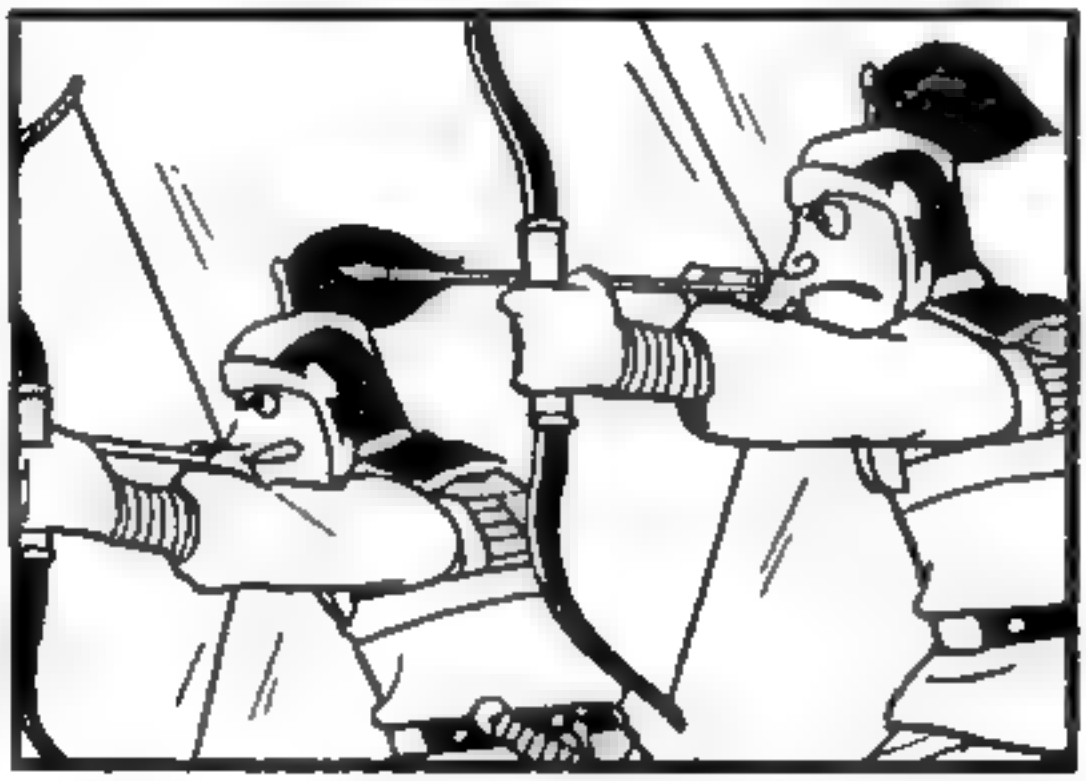

UNTIL CAO ZHEN WAS RIDING ALONE

DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE! RICHES GO TO WHOEVER CAPTURES HIM!

OHH! THAT'S CAO ZHEN OVER THERE!







UGH!

AGHH!

WILL THIS BE WHERE I FALL...?

EVEN HERE, THERE ARE ENEMIES...

HM?

SIMA YI!?

COMMANDER! IT IS A GREAT RELIEF TO SEE YOU ARE STILL ALIVE. I WILL CHASE OFF YOUR PURSUERS.

LET US SAVE THE TALK FOR LATER. WE MUST ATTEND TO YOUR WOUNDS FIRST.

AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE AT THE JI GORGE?

CAN I ASK YOU SOME-THING?

NOT WELL...

HOW ARE YOU FEELING, SIR?

OF COURSE, SIR.

AH, YOU WERE WONDERING ABOUT THAT.

HOW DID YOU SUDDENLY APPEAR HERE...?

THUS, I SENT A MESSENGER IN HASTE TO INQUIRE ABOUT YOUR SITUATION. HOWEVER, YOU RESPONDED THAT YOU HAD YET TO SEE A SINGLE SHU SOLDIER.

WHEN MY FORCES SUCCESSFULLY AMBUSHED THE SHU FORCES AT THE JI GORGE, I FEARED OTHER SHU TROOPS WOULD TRY TO PASS THROUGH HERE AT XIE GORGE AROUND THE SAME TIME.

NOW IF ZHUGE LIANG REALLY WERE PLANNING TO MARCH FOR QISHAN, IT WOULD MAKE NO SENSE TO BOTTLENECK ALL HIS TROOPS THROUGH ONLY THE XIE GORGE AND SLOW DOWN HIS ADVANCE. IF I WERE HIM, I WOULD DEFINITELY SEND TROOPS THROUGH BOTH GORGES. THUS, I DECIDED TO MAKE A RAPID MARCH TO HERE JUST IN CASE.

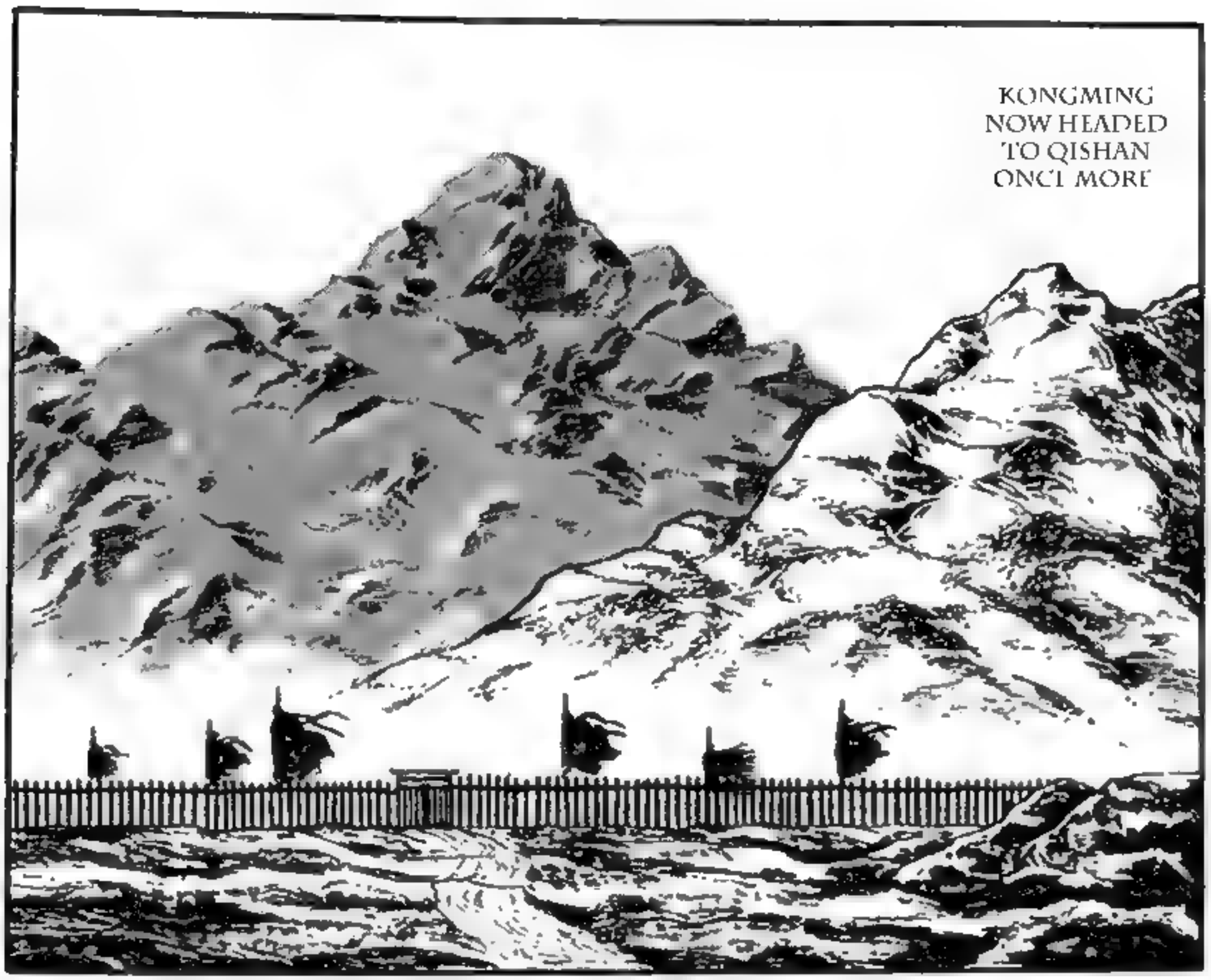
.....

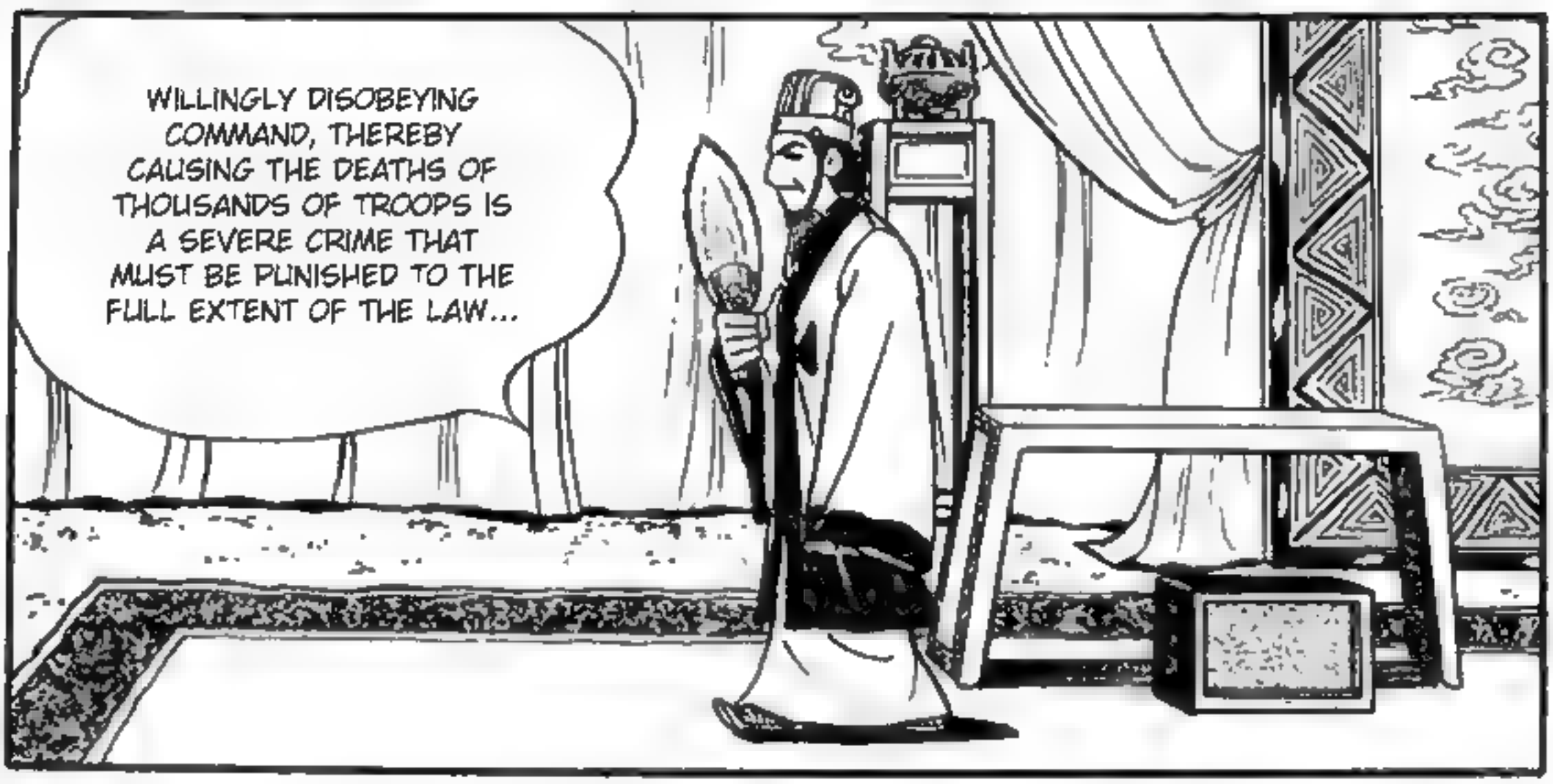
FORGIVE ME FOR MY CARELESS-NESS. MY MISJUDGEMENT HAS CAUSED THE LOSS OF MANY TROOPS ONCE AGAIN.

I SEE... I ACKNOWLEDGE YOU AS THE VICTOR OF OUR WAGER.

PLEASE FORGET ABOUT THE WAGER, SIR. I ONLY MADE IT TO PERSUADE YOU TO DEFEND BOTH GORGES JUST IN CASE. I ASSURE YOU IT WAS NOT MADE OUT OF ANY PETTY OR SINISTER INTENTIONS.

DEATH BY RAGE




WILLINGLY DISOBEYING COMMAND, THEREBY CAUSING THE DEATHS OF THOUSANDS OF TROOPS IS A SEVERE CRIME THAT MUST BE PUNISHED TO THE FULL EXTENT OF THE LAW...

ZHANG NI AND DU QIONG SAY THEY NEVER RECEIVED THE ORDER, SO I'LL CONVENIENTLY NOT QUESTION THEIR RESPONSIBILITY.

HOWEVER, WEI YAN AND CHEN SHI MUST BE CONSPICUOUSLY DEALT WITH...

THAT BEING SAID, IF NO PUNISHMENTS ARE HANDED OUT, OTHER OFFICERS WILL BE WILLING TO DISOBEY ORDERS IN THEIR OVEREAGERNESS FOR REWARDS.

BUT CAPABLE OFFICERS ARE SCARCE, AND I'VE LOST MORE THAN A FEW OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS OF CAMPAIGNING...

IT'S UNDENIABLE THAT WEI YAN IS A CRUCIAL GENERAL FOR SHU'S FUTURE. MUST I BRING GOOD NEWS TO THE ENEMIES JUST TO PRESERVE THE CHAIN OF COMMAND...?

BUT SENTENCING THEM BOTH TO DEATH WILL ONLY BENEFIT WEI...

CHEN SHI! YOU IGNORED MY ORDERS TO SLOW DOWN AND EXERCISE CAUTION, THEREBY WALKING INTO SIMA YI'S TRAP. 4000 OF YOUR TROOPS PERISHED AS A RESULT OF YOUR RECKLESS FOLLY.

SILENCE! HOW DARE YOU TRY TO SHIFT BLAME AFTER YOU KNOWINGLY IGNORED MY ORDERS!

B-BUT GENERAL WEI YAN ALSO GAVE ME PERMISSION TO ADVAN-

HAD WEI YAN NOT ARRIVED IN TIME, YOUR FORCES WOULD HAVE BEEN UTTERLY ANNHILATED! MY HEART ACHES AT THE THOUGHT OF 4000 BRAVE SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES BECAUSE OF YOUR HASTY PURSUIT FOR GLORY!

YOU ARE HEREBY SENTENCED TO DEATH.

YES, SIR...

WEI YAN, YOU TOO KNOWINGLY DISO-BEYED MY ORDERS. YOUR CRIME IS JUST AS HEAVY.

YES, SIR...

HOWEVER, AS YOUR HEROICS MANAGED TO SAVE CHEN SHI'S REMAINING SOLDIERS AND DRIVE OFF SIMA YI'S TROOPS, I WILL LET YOU GO OFF WITH ONLY A STERN WARNING. BUT YOU ARE STILL WALKING ON A THIN LINE, REMEMBER THAT.

THIS WAY, SIR.

TAKE CHEN SHI OUTSIDE TO BEHEAD HIM.

CHEN SHI'S HEAD WAS DISPLAYED AT THE CAMP FOR ALL TO SEE.

WHAT USE COULD COME FROM SHAMEFULLY STRUGGLING NOW? I'VE ALREADY RESIGNED TO MY FATE.

REMAIN STILL AND PREPARE YOURSELF, SIR.

蜀
SIR!

CAO ZHEN IS ILL?
AFTER CAREFUL OBSERVATION OF THE ENEMY CAMPS, I'VE LEARNED THAT CAO ZHEN IS LYING SICK.

AHH, THEN IT MUST BE A SERIOUS ILLNESS...

I BELIEVE SOME OF OUR ARROWS WOUNDED HIM IN THE LAST BATTLE.

I SEE...

BUT THE SIMPLE FACT THAT HE'S STUBBORNLY REMAINING AT THE BATTLE-FRONT MEANS IT IS SERIOUS ENOUGH THAT HIS DEPARTURE CAN CAUSE FURTHER DEMORALIZATION OF HIS TROOPS.

SERIOUS? WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT, SIR?

IF IT WERE SLIGHT, HE'D LEAVE FOR CHANG'AN.

A LETTER THAT WILL FILL HIM WITH THE HOT FURY OF A THOUSAND SUNS.

A LETTER?

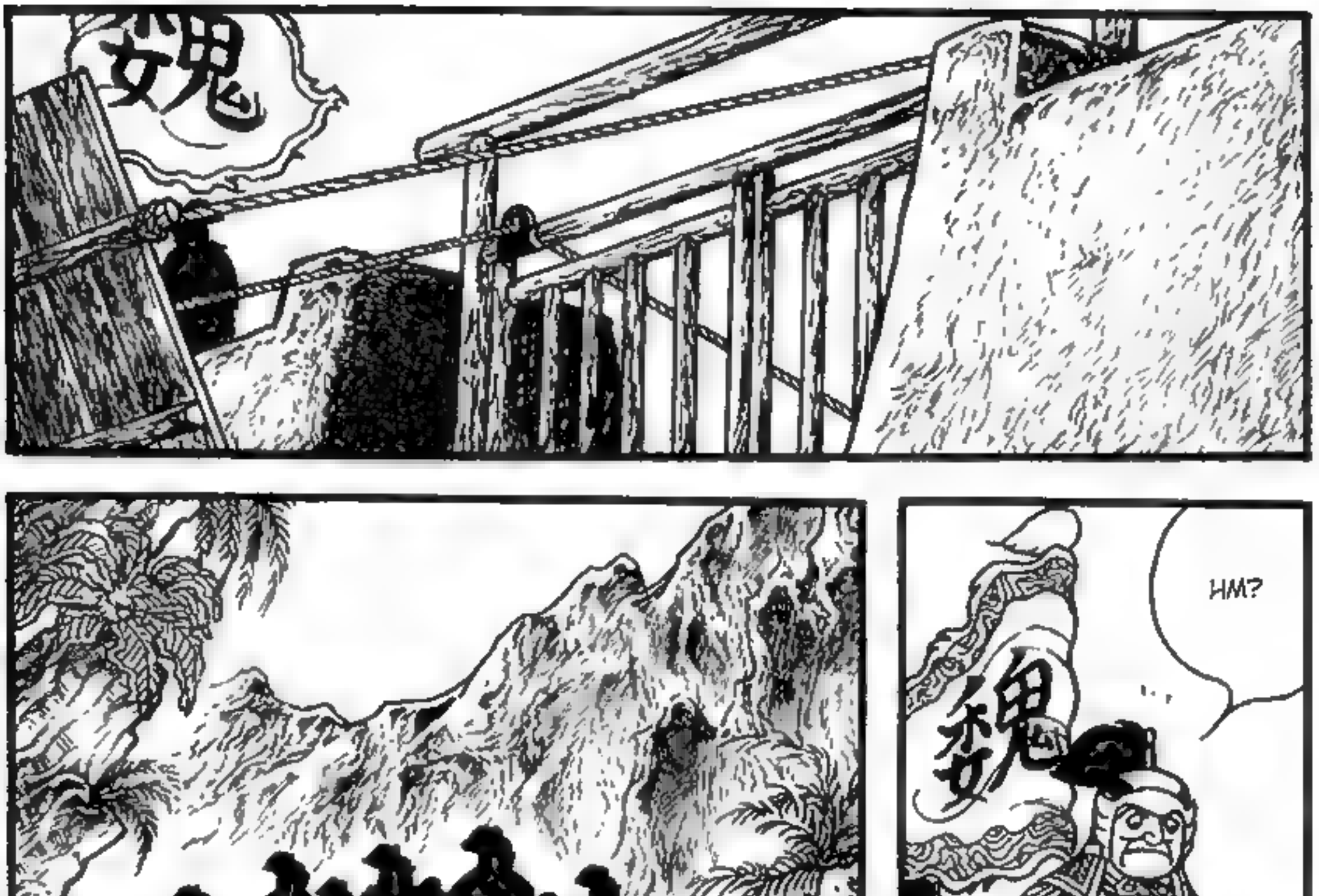
I WILL SEND CAO ZHEN A LETTER.

YES, SIR.

IF CAO ZHEN STILL REFUSES TO ATTACK AFTER READING THIS, THEN THAT WILL BE FURTHER CONFIRMATION OF HIS SERIOUS ILLNESS.

YES, SIR.

USE THE WEI CAPTIVES WE'VE TAKEN IN THE LAST BATTLE TO DELIVER THIS LETTER.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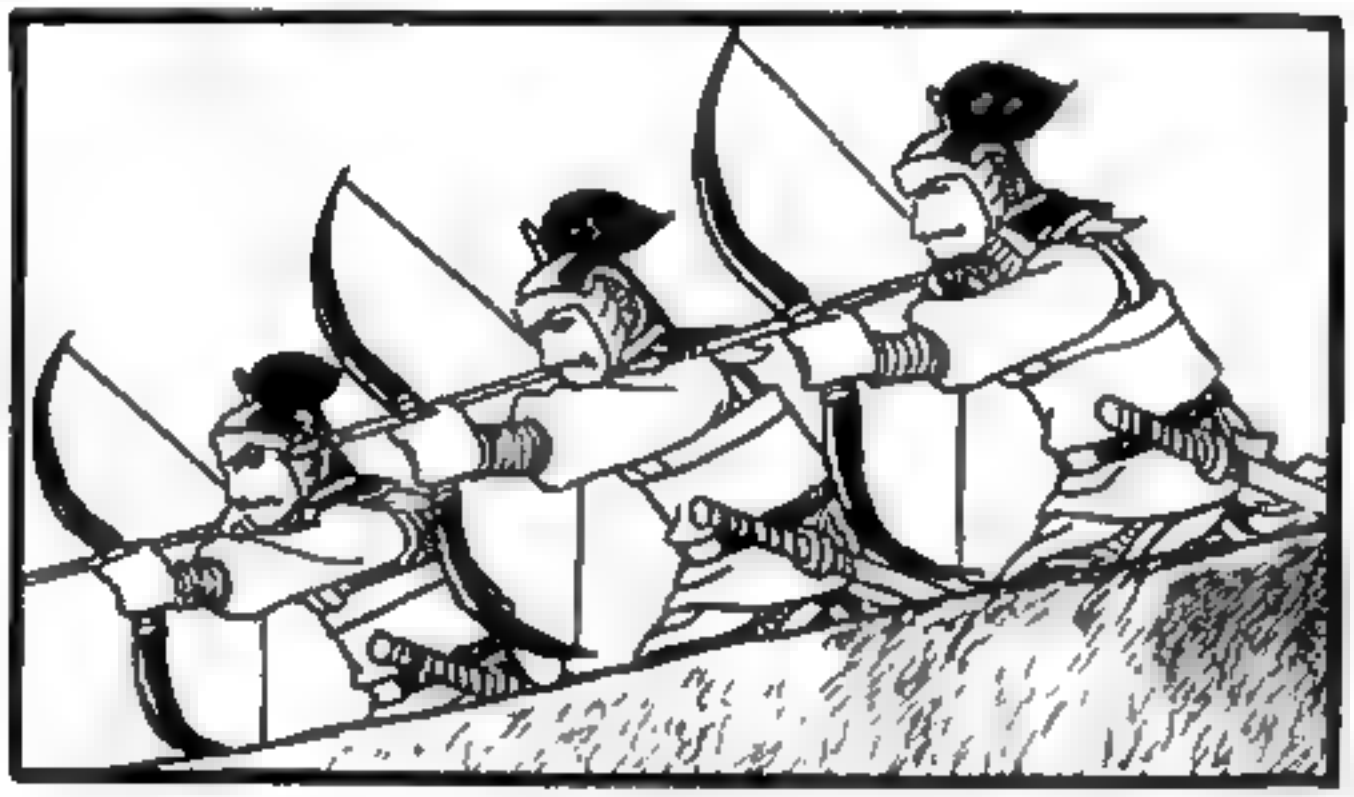
HM?
...
女鬼



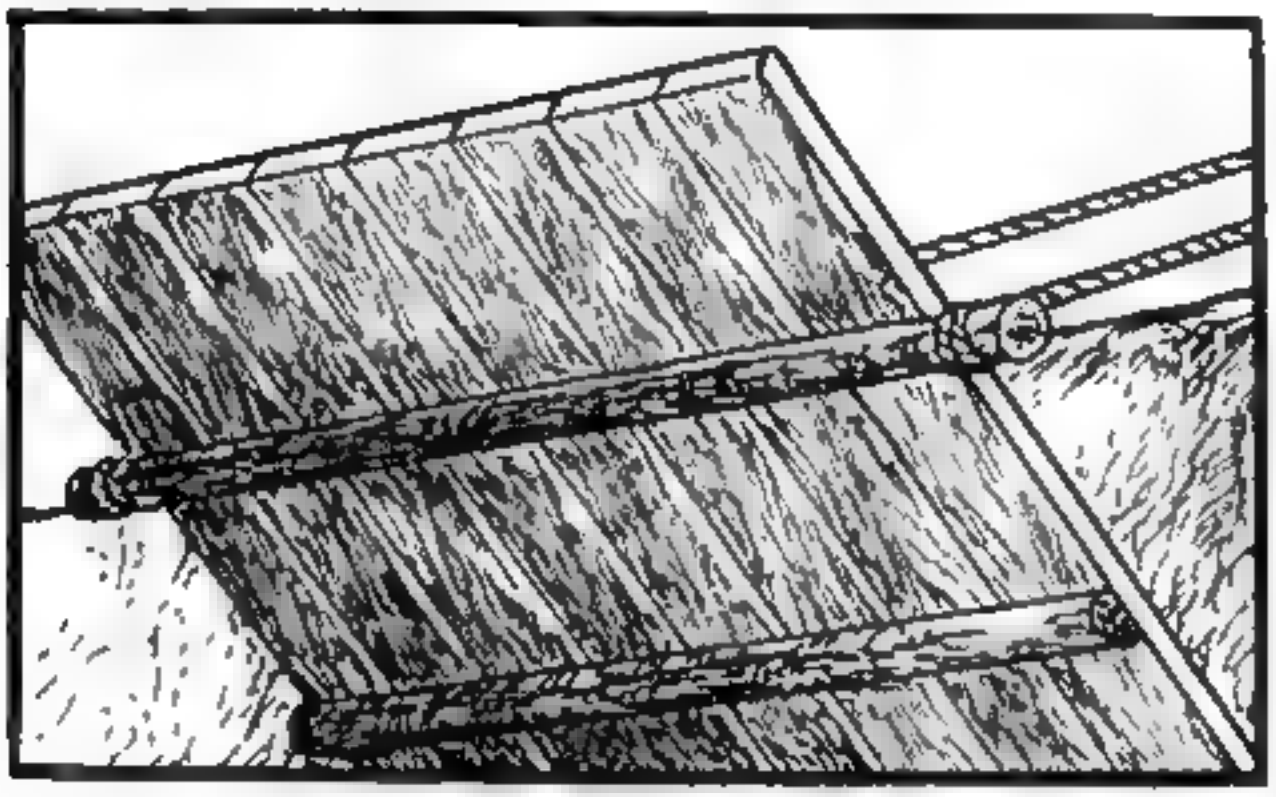
HALT! WHO GOES THERE!?

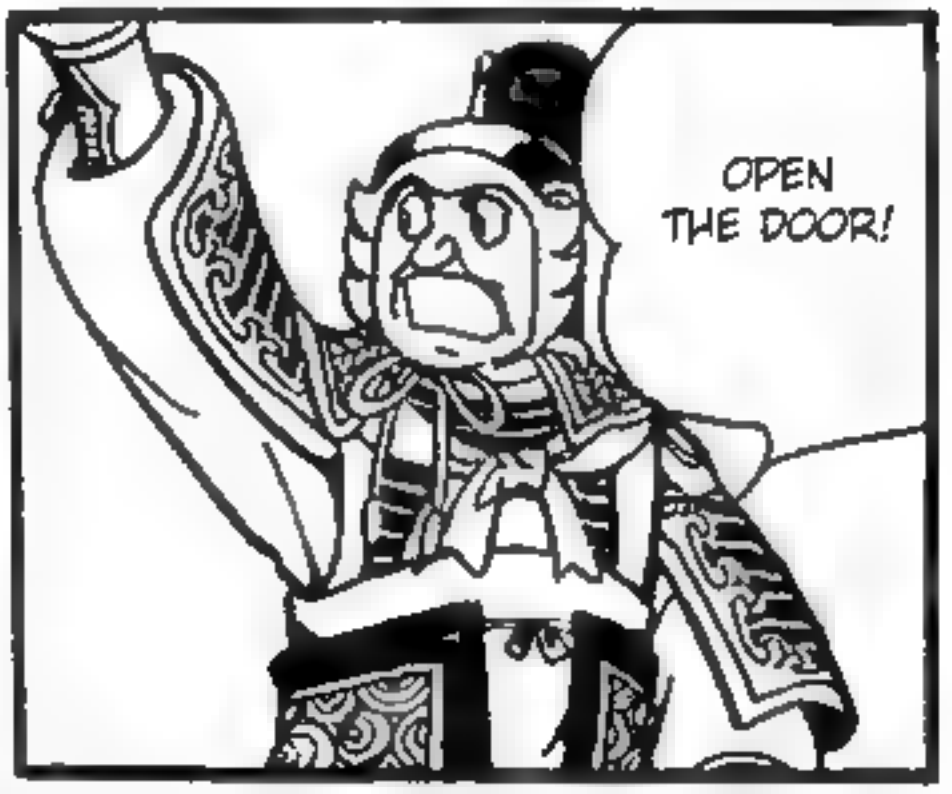
THEN HOW ARE YOU HERE?

WE'RE WEI SOLDIERS WHO WERE TAKEN CAPTIVE IN THE RECENT BATTLE!

ZHUGE LIANG SAID WE WERE FREE TO LEAVE.

AS LONG AS WE DELIVERED THIS LETTER TO THE COMMANDER, THAT IS.

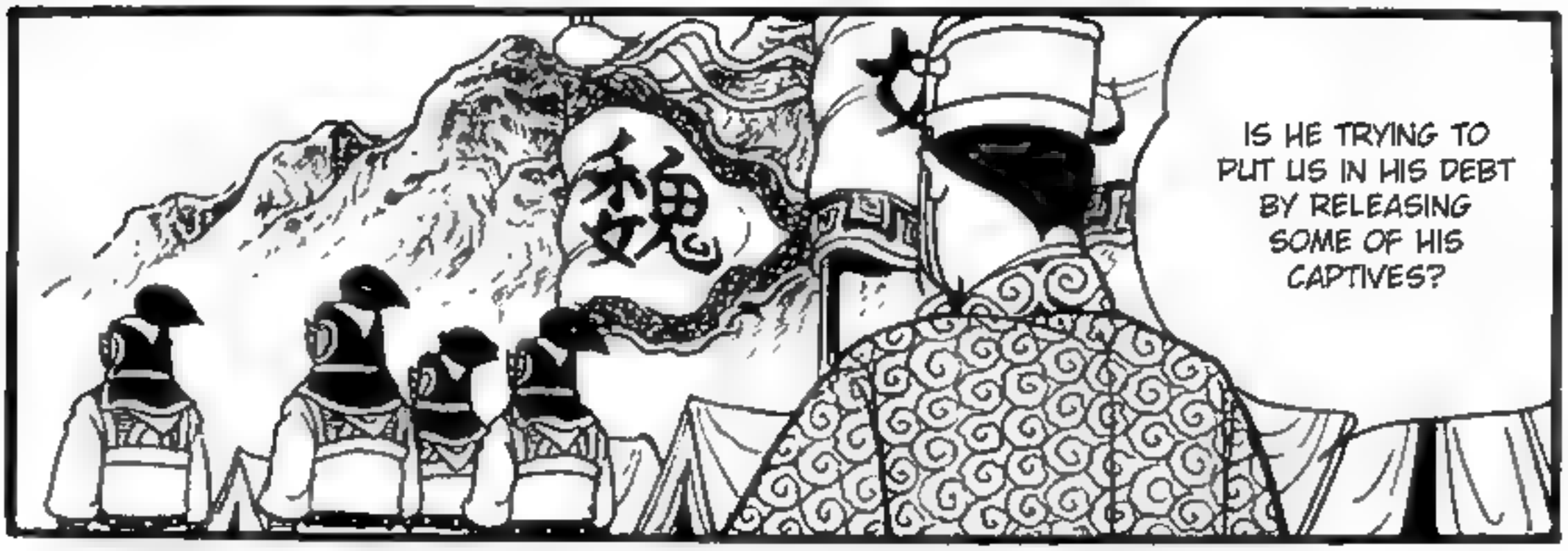



OPEN THE DOOR!

A LETTER FROM ZHUGE LIANG?
YES, SIR.

THANK YOU.
YOU MAY EXCUSE YOURSELF THEN.

HERE YOU GO, SIR.
I WILL HAND IT TO HIM THEN.


魏
IS HE TRYING TO PUT US IN HIS DEBT BY RELEASING SOME OF HIS CAPTIVES?

APPARENTLY, ZHUGE LIANG HAS SENT YOU A LTTER.

HE HAS!?

NOT WELL...

HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY, SIR?

"A PROPER GENERAL MUST KNOW WHEN TO SEIZE CHANCES, READ THE LAY OF THE LAND, AND POSSESS UPSTANDING MORAL FIBER."

LET ME SEE.

M-MY INCOMPE-TENCE DISPLAYED TO ALL UNDER HEAVEN!?

"HOWEVER, YOU POSSESS NONE OF THESE 3 QUALITIES AND YOUR INCOMPE-TENCE HAS NOW BEEN DISPLAYED TO ALL UNDER HEAVEN."

ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING! HOW... HOW DARE YOU...

UGHH!

HNGHH!

COMMANDER CAO ZHEN!

COM-MANDER!

NO, NONE AT ALL, SIR.

DID YOU NOTICE ANY MOVEMENTS WITHIN THE ENEMY CAMP?

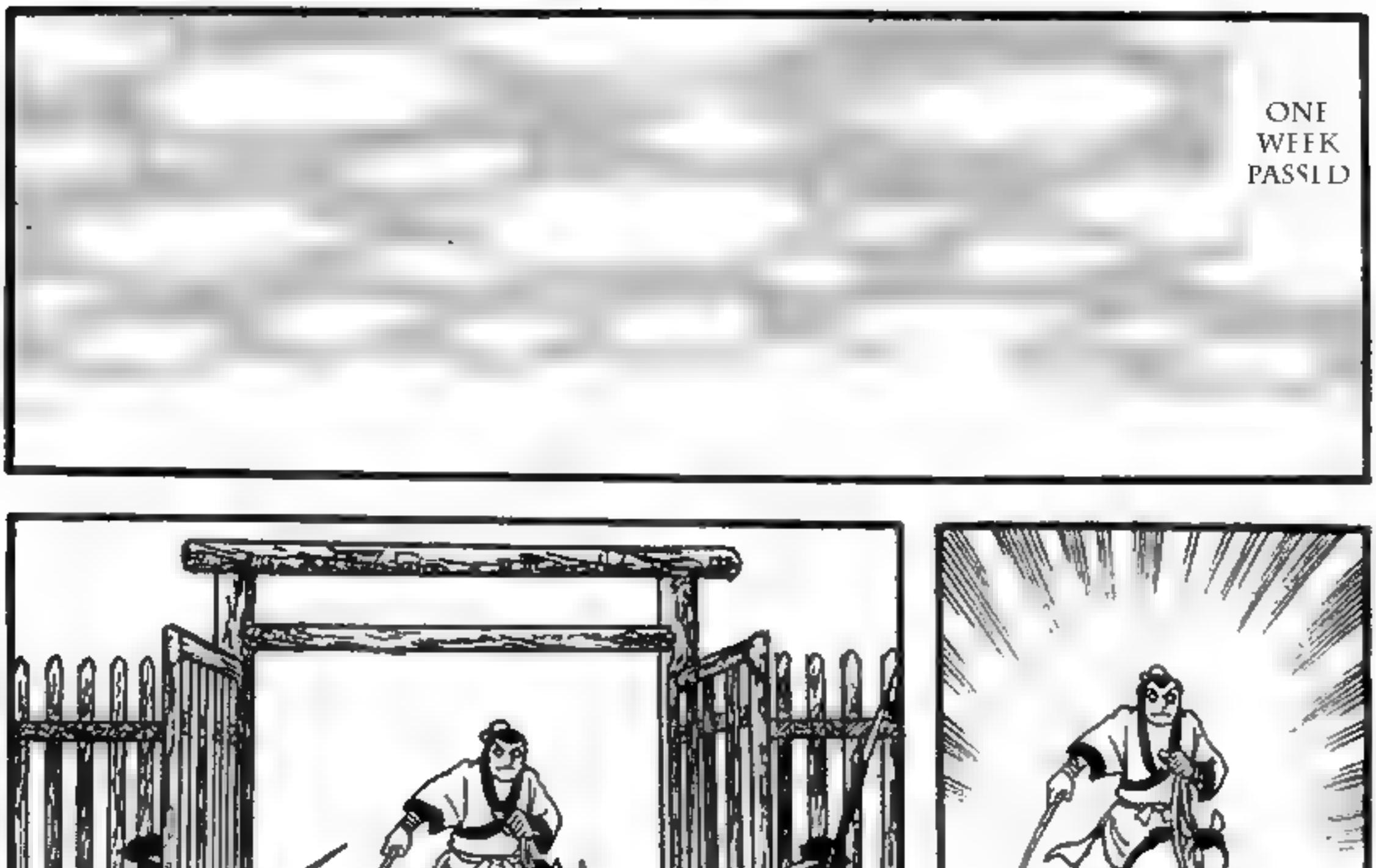
THAT SERIOUS, SIR?

I DOUBT HE WILL LAST EVEN 10 MORE DAYS.

ANY MAN WITH A BACKBONE WOULD HAVE TAKEN SOME SORT OF ACTION AFTER READING SUCH AN INSULTING LETTER. MY SUSPICIONS OF A SERIOUS ILLNESS MUST BE TRUE.

YES, SIR.

JUST KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON THE ENEMY CAMPS IN THE MEANTIME.


ONE
WEEK
PASSED

URGENT
REPORT!

WHAT IS IT?

URGENT REPORT!

CARRIAGE DRESSED IN BLACK SHEETS AND CARRYING A CASKET?

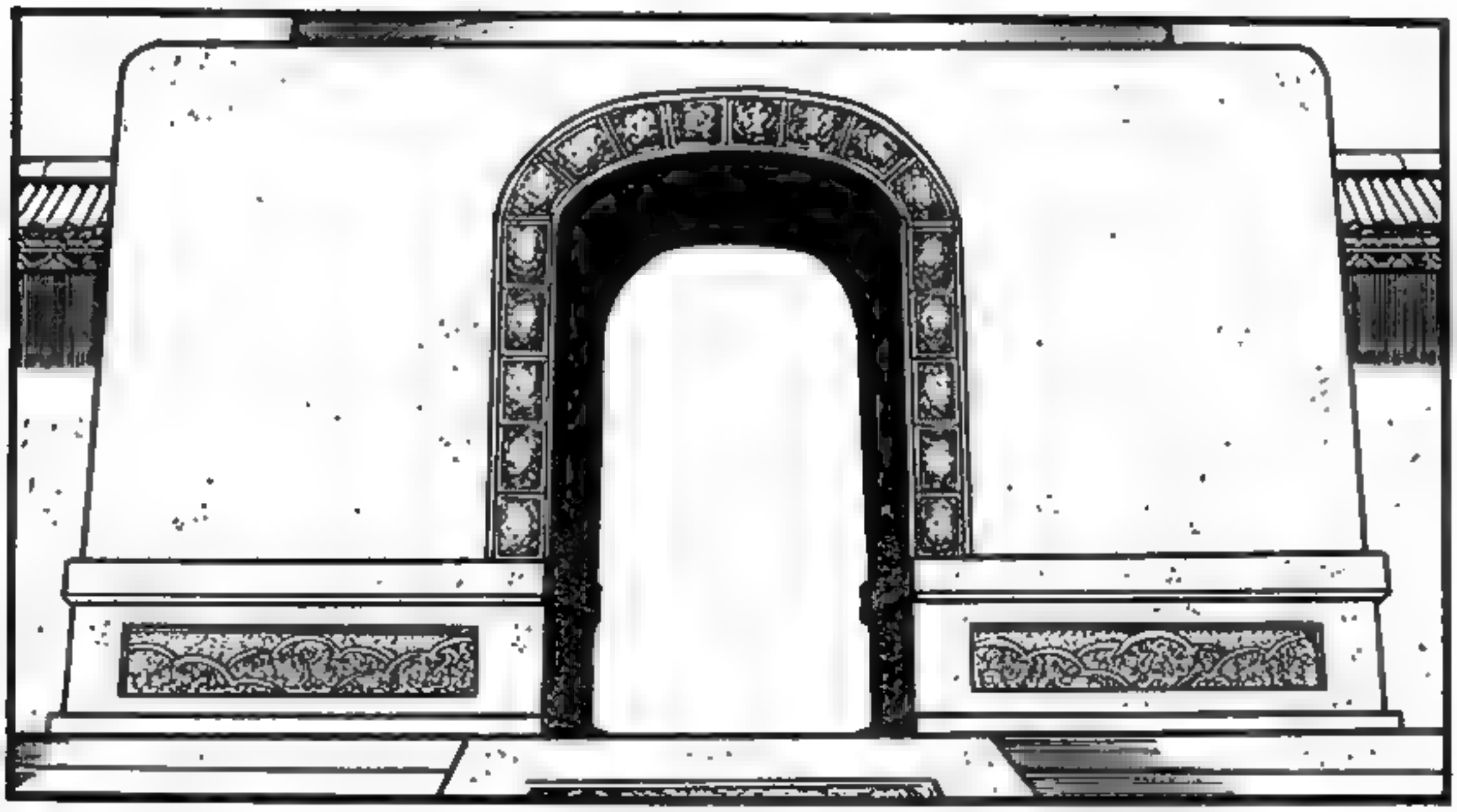
A CARRIAGE DRESSED IN BLACK SHEETS AND CARRYING A CASKET HAS HEADED FOR CHANG'AN WITH A SMALL CAVALRY ESCORT.

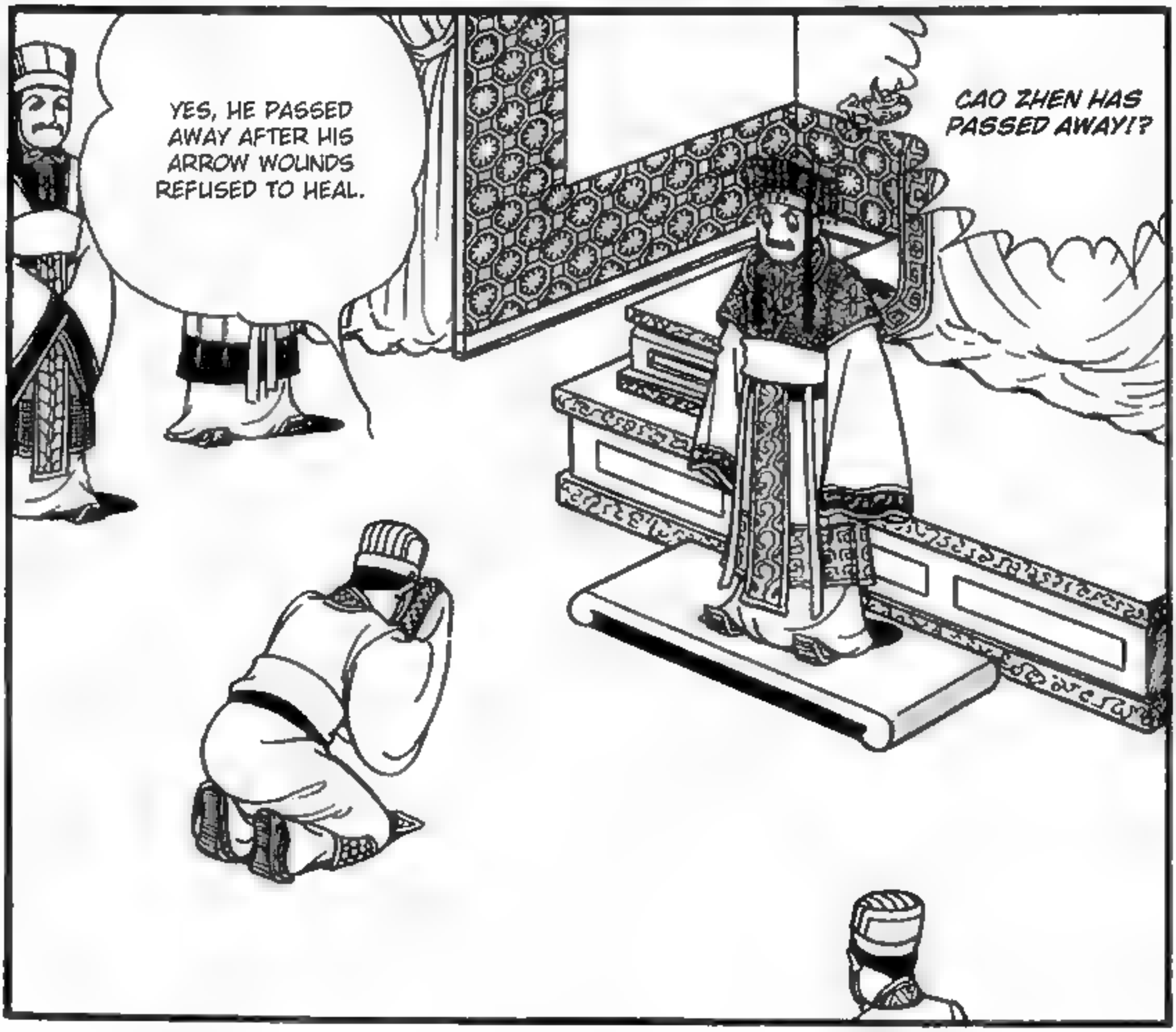
THE WEI ARMY WILL ATTACK US WITH A FURY WE'VE YET SEEN IN ORDER TO AVENGE CAO ZHEN'S DEATH. STAY ON YOUR GUARD.

CAO ZHEN'S CORPSE IS IN THAT CASKET WITHOUT A DOUBT.

SOME OF THE WEI TROOPS WHISPERED AMONGST THEMSELVES THAT KONGMING HAD KILLED THEIR COMMANDER WITH A SINGLE LETTER

TRUE TO KONGMING'S PREDICTIONS, CAO ZHEN LIFELESS BODY WAS BEING ESCORTED BACK TO CHANG AN READING THE INSULTING LETTER HAD AGGRAVATED HIS CONDITION AND TRIGGERED HIS DEATH




YES, HE PASSED AWAY AFTER HIS ARROW WOUNDS REFUSED TO HEAL.
CAO ZHEN HAS PASSED AWAY!?

ZHUGE LIANG...!

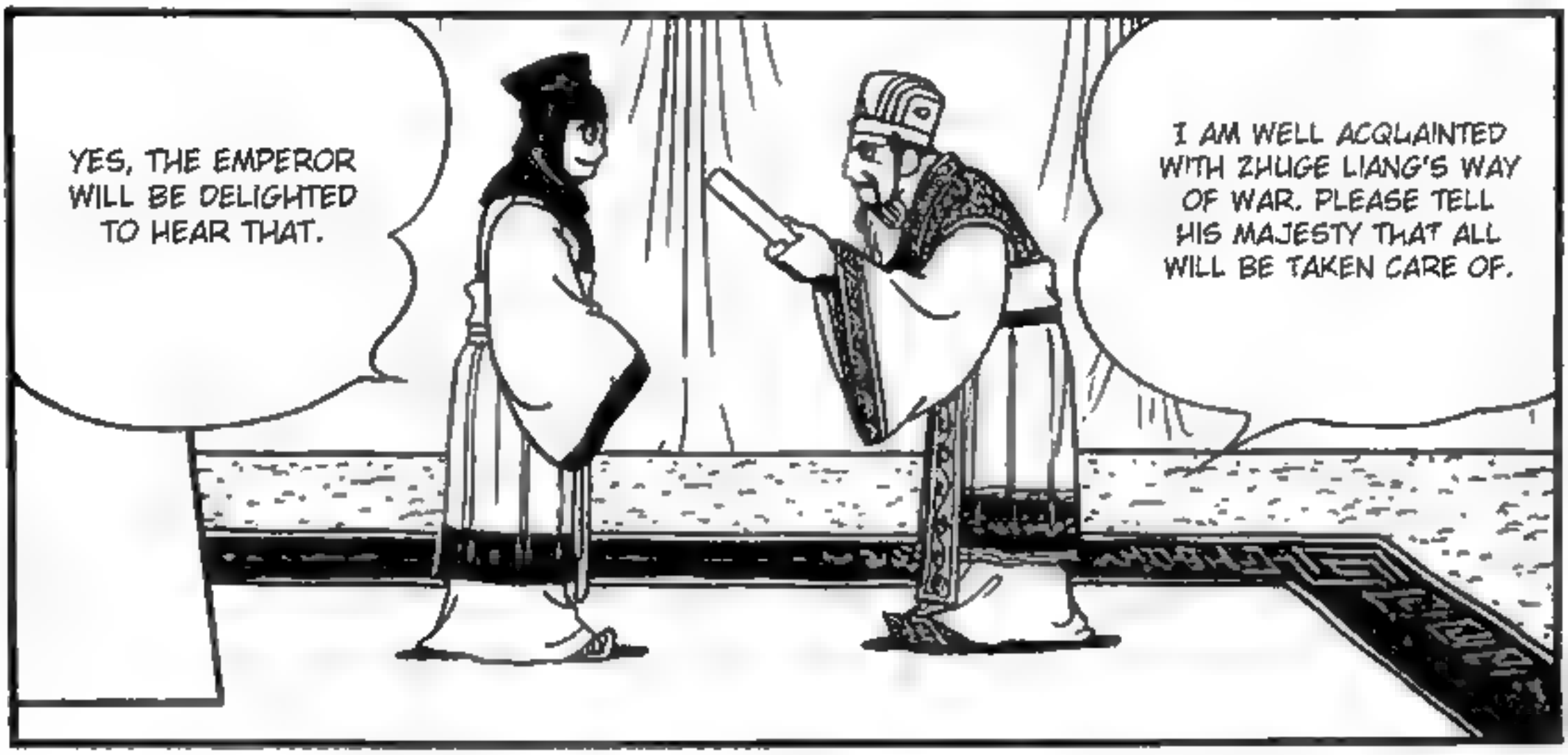
ACCORDING TO RUMOURS, ZHUGE LIANG SENT SUCH AN INSULTING LETTER TO CAO ZHEN THAT HIS RAGE EXPLODED, TRIGGERING HIS DEATH.

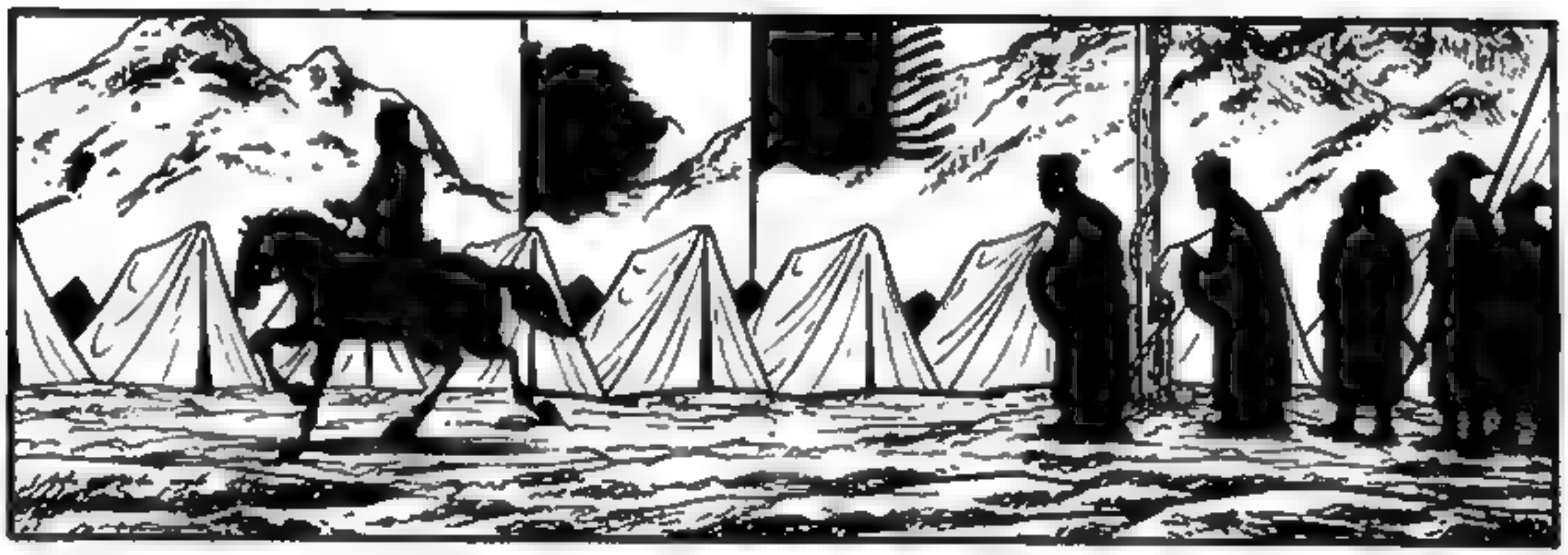
YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

TELL SIMA YI TO AVENGE CAO ZHEN'S DEATH IF EVEN A DAY SOONER!

AS CAO ZHI N WAS A MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY, THE WEI EMPEROR TOOK IT AS A PERSONAL INSULT AND DI MANDI D SIMA YI TO TAKE DECISIVE ACTION.

司馬
司馬
THE EMPEROR EXPECTS GREAT THINGS FROM YOU, COMMANDER.
HIS MAJESTY'S RAGE IS UNDERSTANDABLE. I WILL LEAD AN ATTACK AGAINST ZHUGE LIANG TOMORROW IF POSSIBLE.

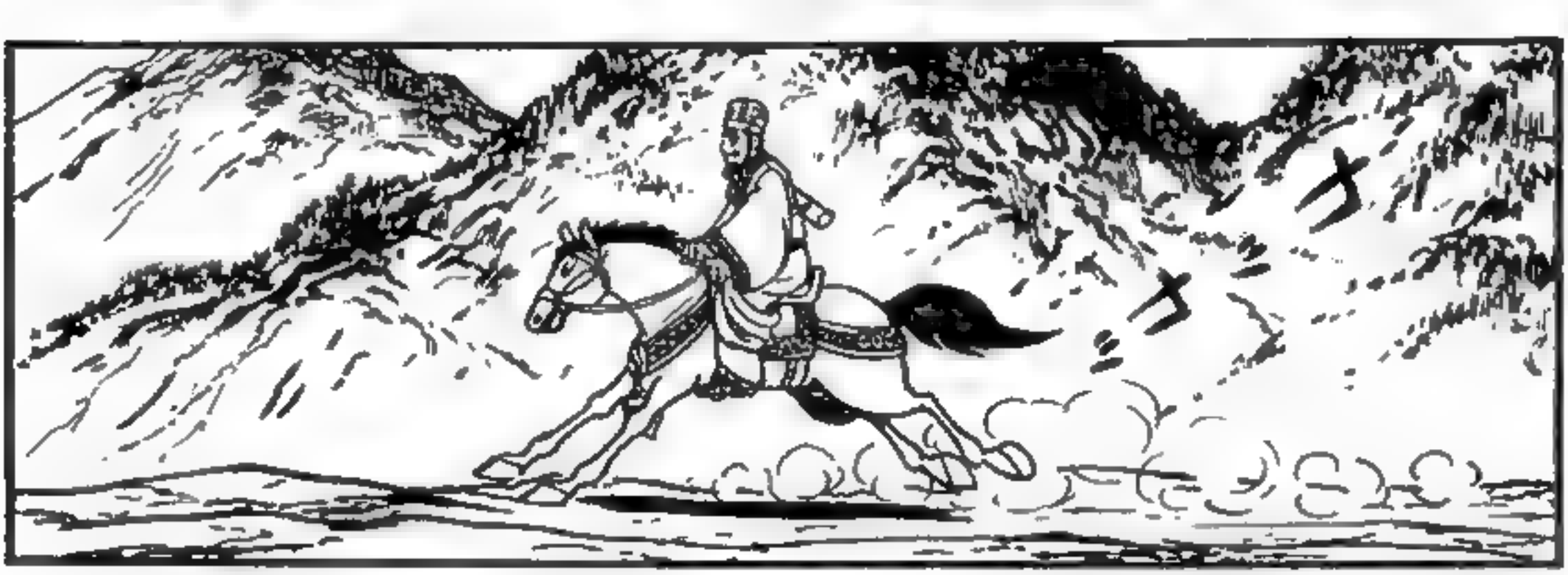

YES, THE EMPEROR WILL BE DELIGHTED TO HEAR THAT.
I AM WELL ACQUAINTED WITH ZHUGE LIANG'S WAY OF WAR. PLEASE TELL HIS MAJESTY THAT ALL WILL BE TAKEN CARE OF.

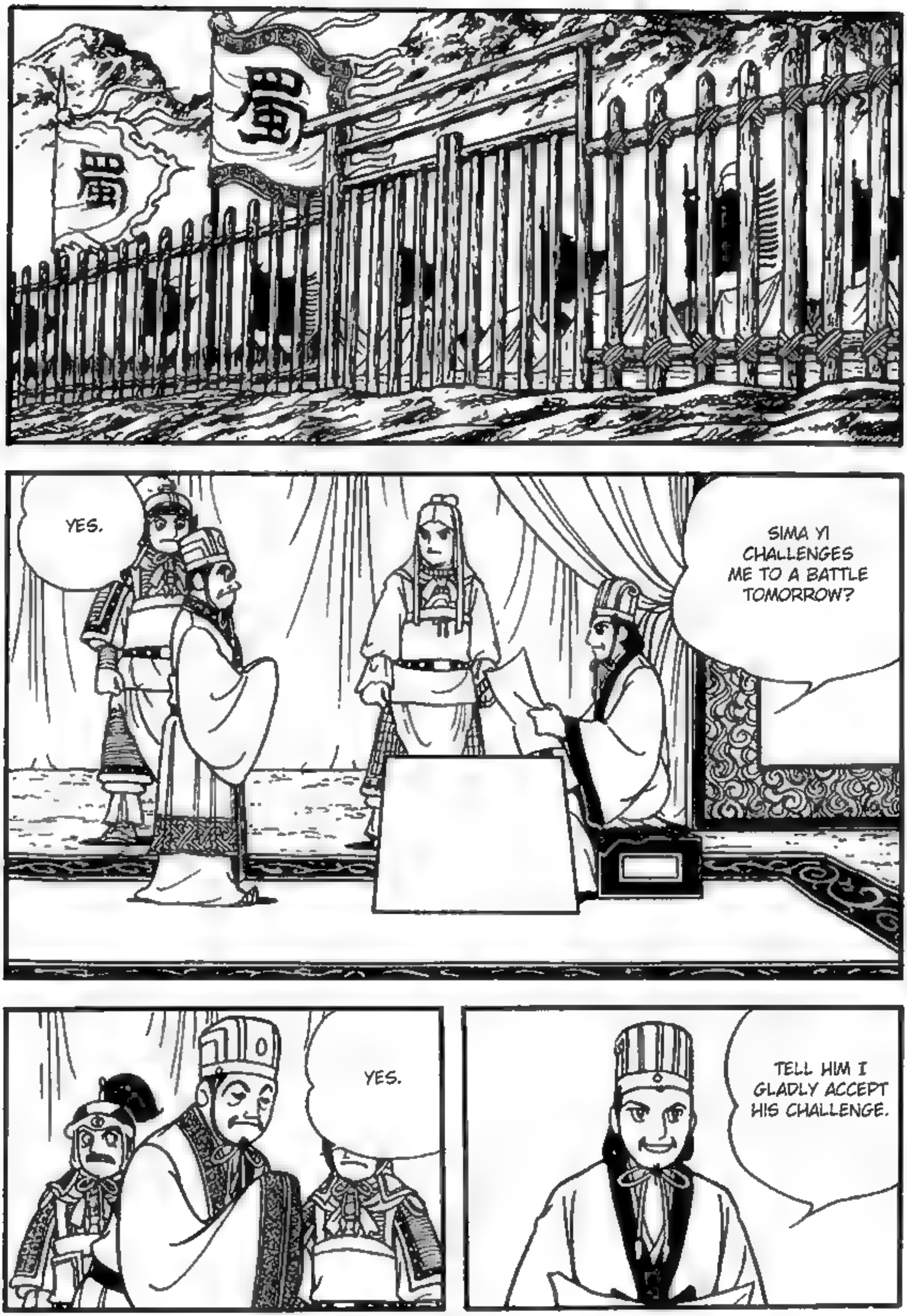


YES, SIR.
GIVE ME A BRUSH AND PAPER.

IT'S TIME FOR A REAL WAR WITH ZHUGE LIANG...

DELIVER THIS TO ZHUGE LIANG.




YES.
SIMA YI CHALLENGES ME TO A BATTLE TOMORROW?
YES.
TELL HIM I GLADLY ACCEPT HIS CHALLENGE.

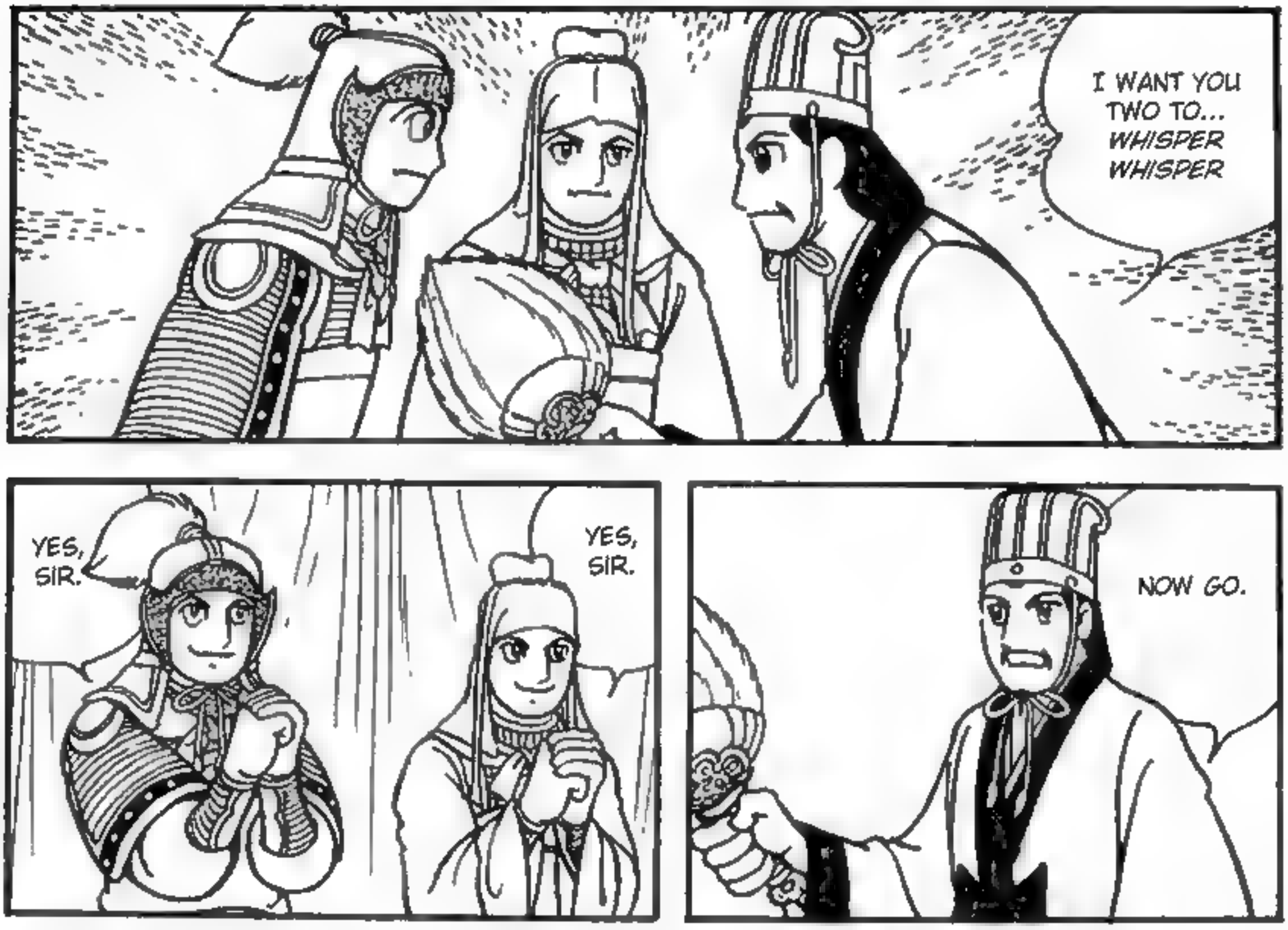
WEI'S DETERMINATION AND RESOLVE WILL NOT BE AS LIGHT AS BEFORE. CARELESS BLUNDERS OUT OF A HASTY DESIRE FOR GLORY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. YOU MUST ALL THOROUGHLY CARRY OUT ORDERS.

GENTLEMEN, SIMA YI HAS SENT US A LETTER OF CHALLENGE.

YES?

YES?

JIANG WEI, GUAN XING.


I WANT YOU TWO TO... WHISPER WHISPER
YES, SIR.
YES, SIR.
NOW GO.
YES, SIR.
AS FOR THE REST OF YOU, PREPARE FOR A TOUGH BATTLE TOMORROW.

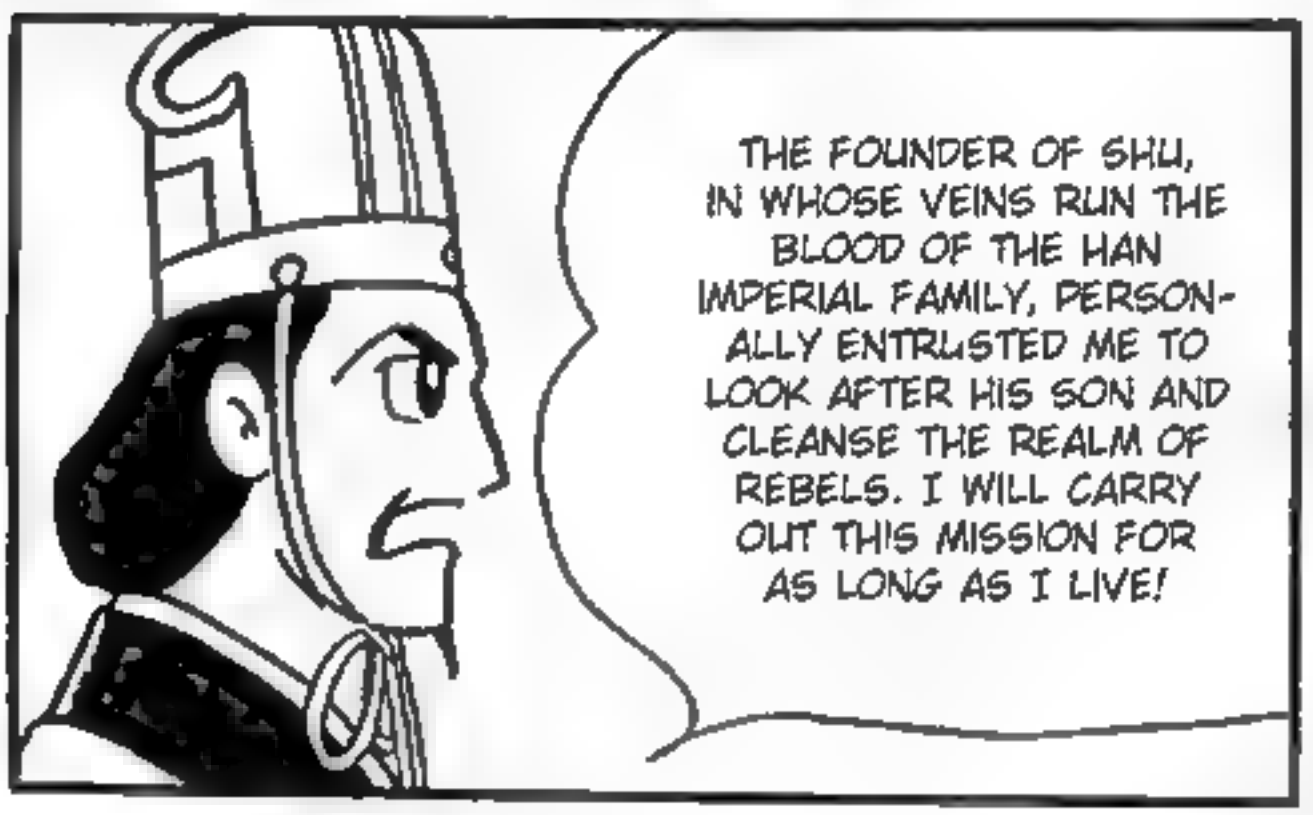
EIGHT ARRAYS

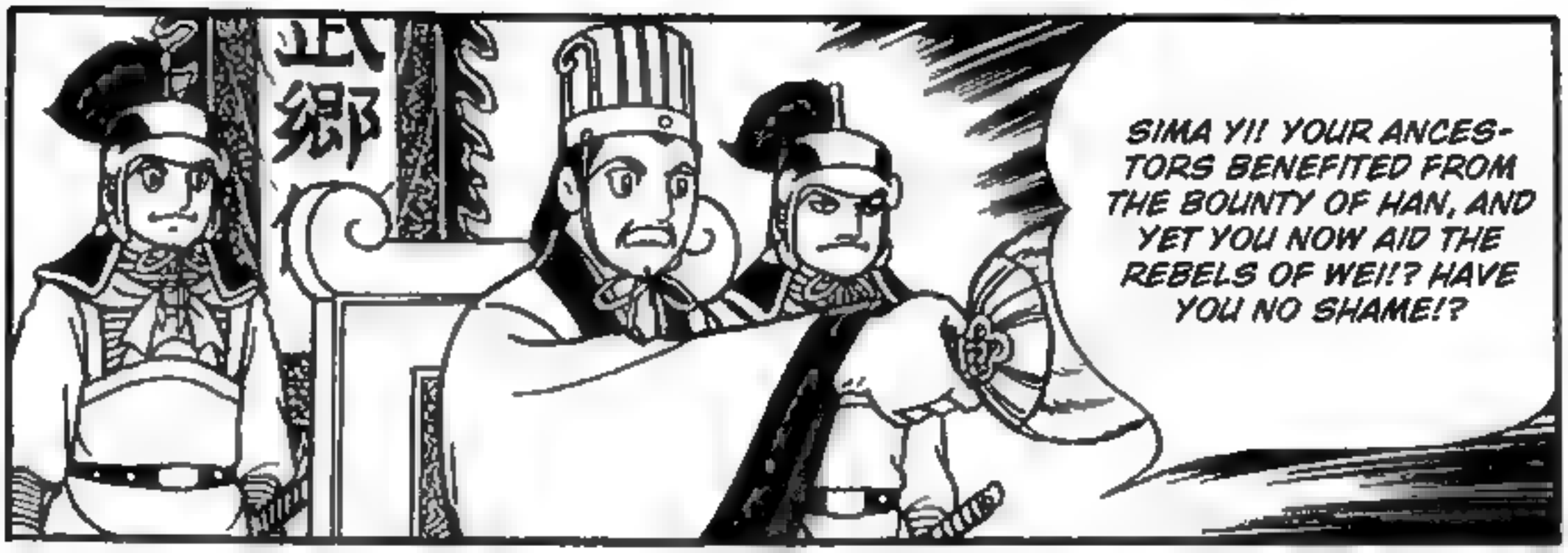
KONGMING LED THE SHU ARMY TO AN OPEN FIELD FLANKED BY THE WEI RIVER ON ONE SIDE, AND HILLS ON THE OTHER SIDE THERE COULD BE NO BETTER PLACE TO STAGE A BATTLE.

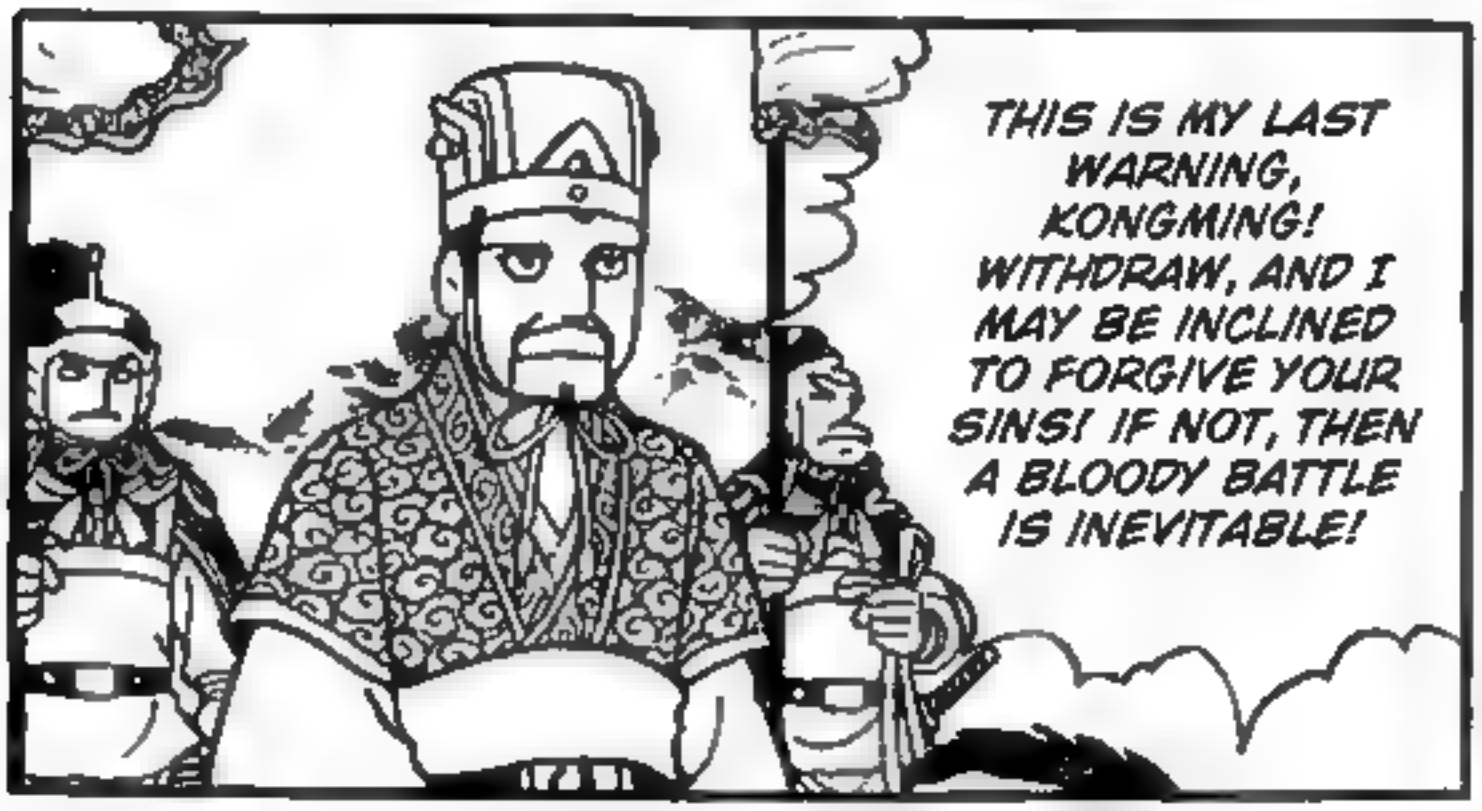
300 DRUMS WERE LOUDLY BEATEN ON BOTH SIDES

KONGMING! ARE YOU PRESENT?

KONGMING! AS YOU ARE ORIGINALLY A MERE PEASANT OF NANYANG, YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN. HOW DARE A BASE, IGNORAMUS LIKE YOU INTERFERE WITH HEAVEN'S WILL AND DESPOIL THE EMPIRE'S LANDS OVER AND OVER AGAIN! THUS, IT IS ONLY JUST THAT OUR FORCES EXTERMINATE YOU. IF YOU PREFER WILD BEASTS TO NOT FEAST UPON YOUR CORPSE, I ADVISE YOU TO WITHDRAW AT ONCE!

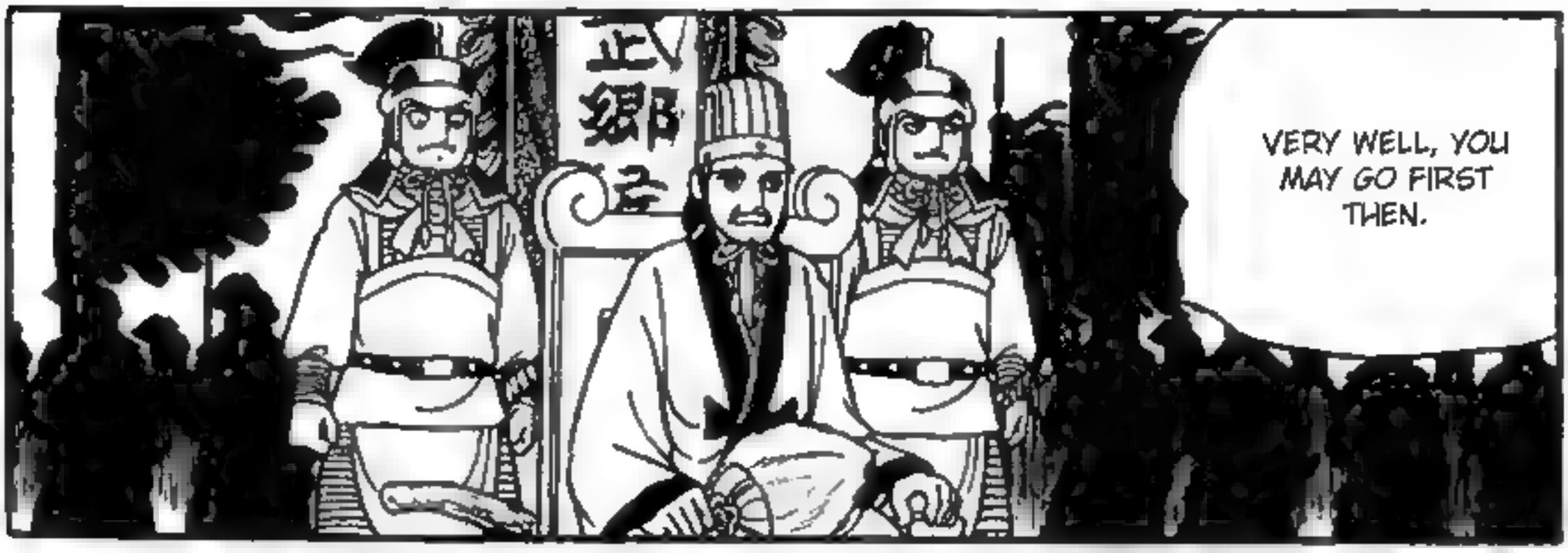

THE FOUNDER OF SHU, IN WHOSE VEINS RUN THE BLOOD OF THE HAN IMPERIAL FAMILY, PERSONALLY ENTRUSTED ME TO LOOK AFTER HIS SON AND CLEANSE THE REALM OF REBELS. I WILL CARRY OUT THIS MISSION FOR AS LONG AS I LIVE!


SIMA YI! YOUR ANCESTORS BENEFITED FROM THE BOUNTY OF HAN, AND YET YOU NOW AID THE REBELS OF WEI!? HAVE YOU NO SHAME!?


THIS IS MY LAST WARNING, KONGMING! WITHDRAW, AND I MAY BE INCLINED TO FORGIVE YOUR SINS! IF NOT, THEN A BLOODY BATTLE IS INEVITABLE!

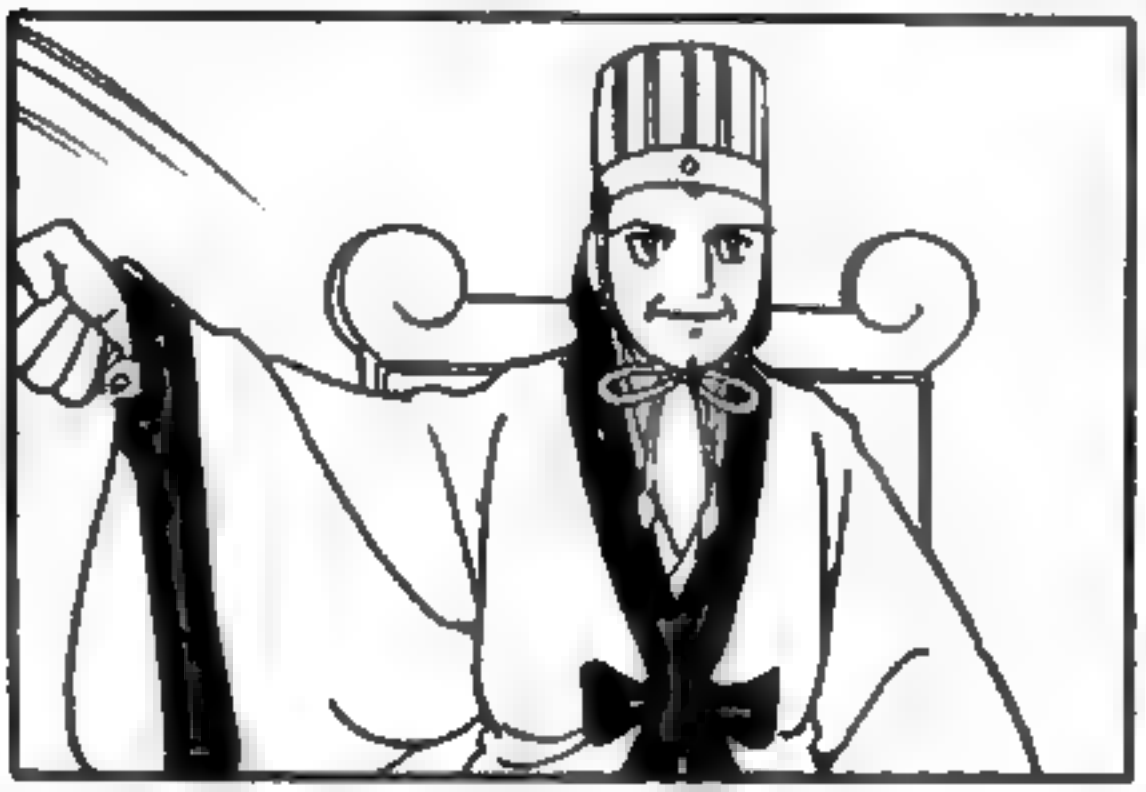
THEN LET IT BE A CONTEST OF BATTLE FORMATIONS!

A BATTLE IS PRECISELY WHAT I WANT. WILL YOU HAVE ONE OF YOUR OFFICERS CHALLENGE ONE OF MINE TO A DUEL? OR WOULD YOU RATHER PIT YOUR BATTLE FORMATIONS AGAINST MINE?

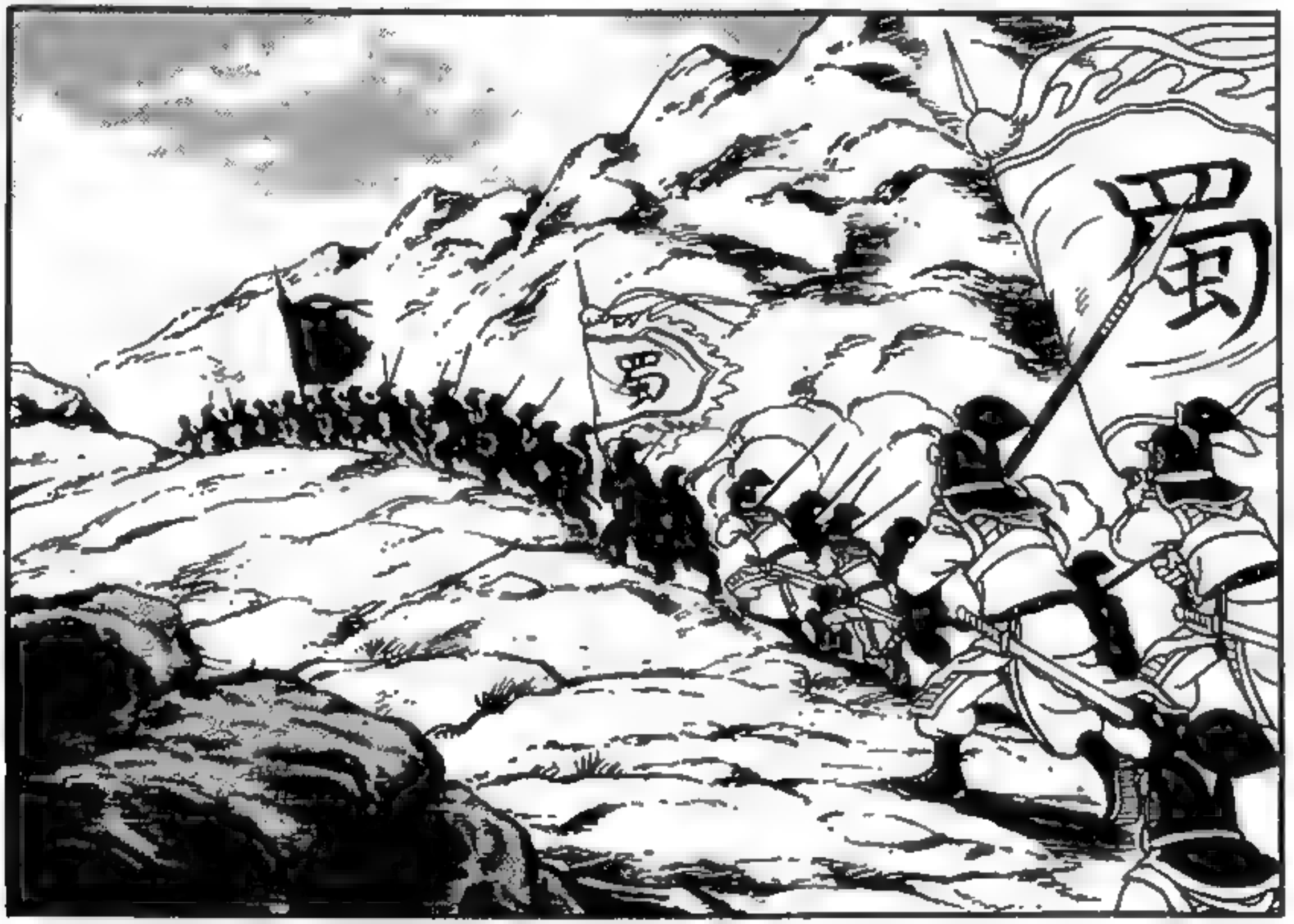

VERY WELL, YOU MAY GO FIRST THEN.

HAHA! EVEN MY LEAST CAPABLE OFFICERS CAN RECOGNIZE THIS FORMATION. IT IS OBVIOUSLY THE "DISORDER-IN-ORDER FORMATION."

WELL, KONGMING? DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS FORMATION IS?



HMPH! THEN IT'S YOUR TURN!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漢丞相武鄉侯
CAN YOU RECOGNIZE MY FORMATION?

OH, YOU'RE SURE ARE YOU? THEN YOU MUST ALSO KNOW HOW TO BEAT IT.

IT IS CLEARLY THE "EIGHT DOCKED GATES FORMATION!" WHAT MAN CAN CALL HIMSELF A GENERAL WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THIS!?

FEEL FREE TO TRY IT THEN. I WILL SIMPLY WATCH WITH AMUSEMENT.

OF COURSE! IT IS A SIMPLE TASK FOR ANY WHO RECOGNIZES IT!

WITH THIS, SIMA YI AND KONGMING BOTH WITHDREW BACK TO THEIR LINES

THE BATTLE OF WITS BETWEEN THE TWO COMMANDERS HAD BEGUN

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司馬

司馬

YES?

HERE, SIR.

YES?

DAI LING, ZHANG HU, YUE CHEN.

IT'S TIME TO BATTLE. YOU THREE WILL LEAD THE FIRST ATTACK.

DESIST, SURVIVE, AND LIBERATE ARE THE SAFE GATES, WHILE INJURE, CONFOUND, EXHIBIT, PERISH, AND SURPRISE. ARE THE DANGEROUS GATES. SURVIVE IS THE EASTERN GATE, DESIST IS THE SOUTHWEST GATE, AND LIBERATE IS THE NORTHERN GATE.

KONGMING HAS SET UP THE FAMOUS EIGHT DOCKED GATES FORMATION. THIS FORMATION HAS EIGHT GATES OF ENTRY: DESIST, SURVIVE, INJURE, CONFOUND, EXHIBIT, PERISH, SURPRISE, AND LIBERATE.

YES, SIR.

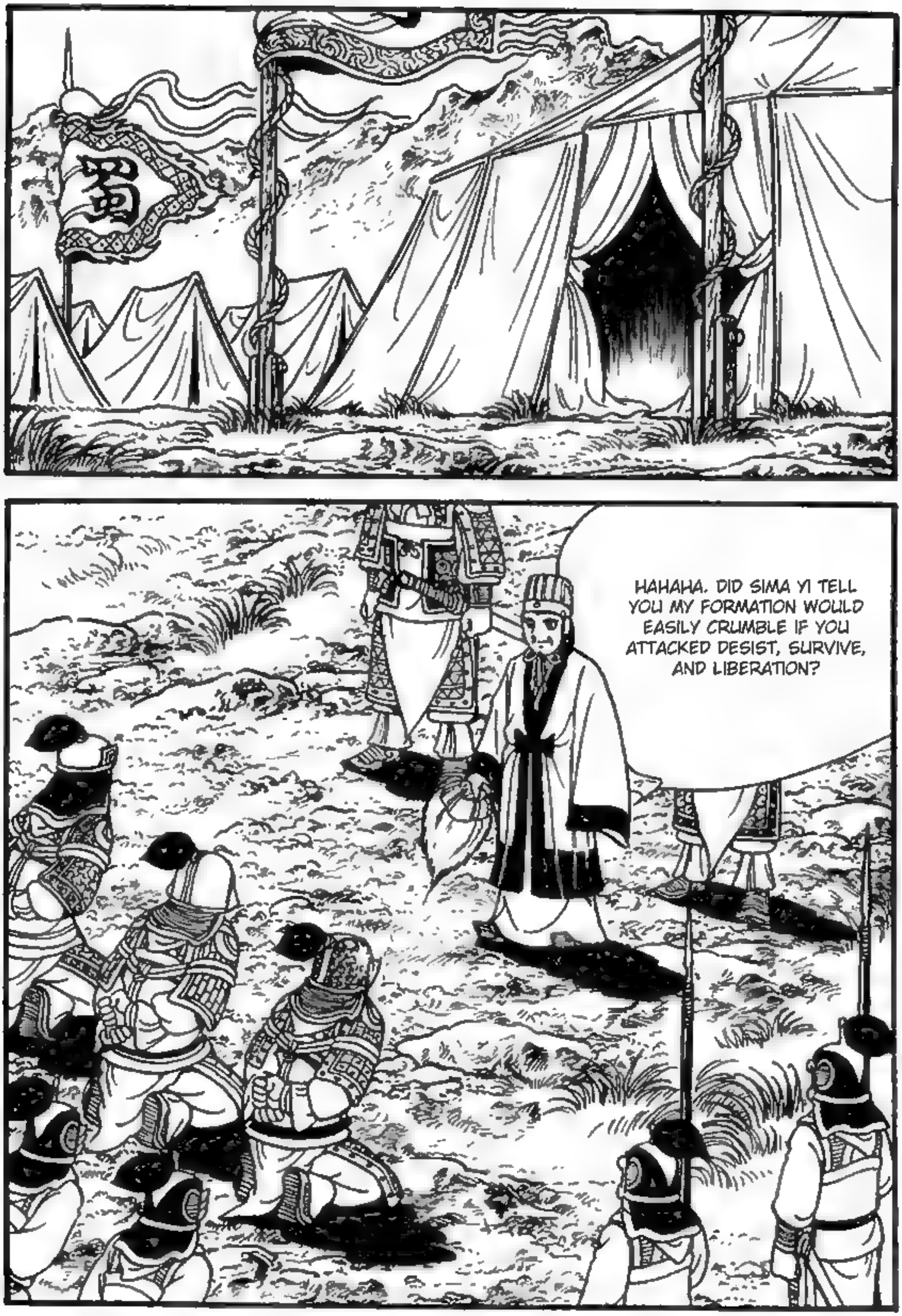
ATTACK THOSE THREE GATES AND THE FORMATION WILL CRUMBLE, HANDING US THE VICTORY.

DAI LING ZHANG HU,

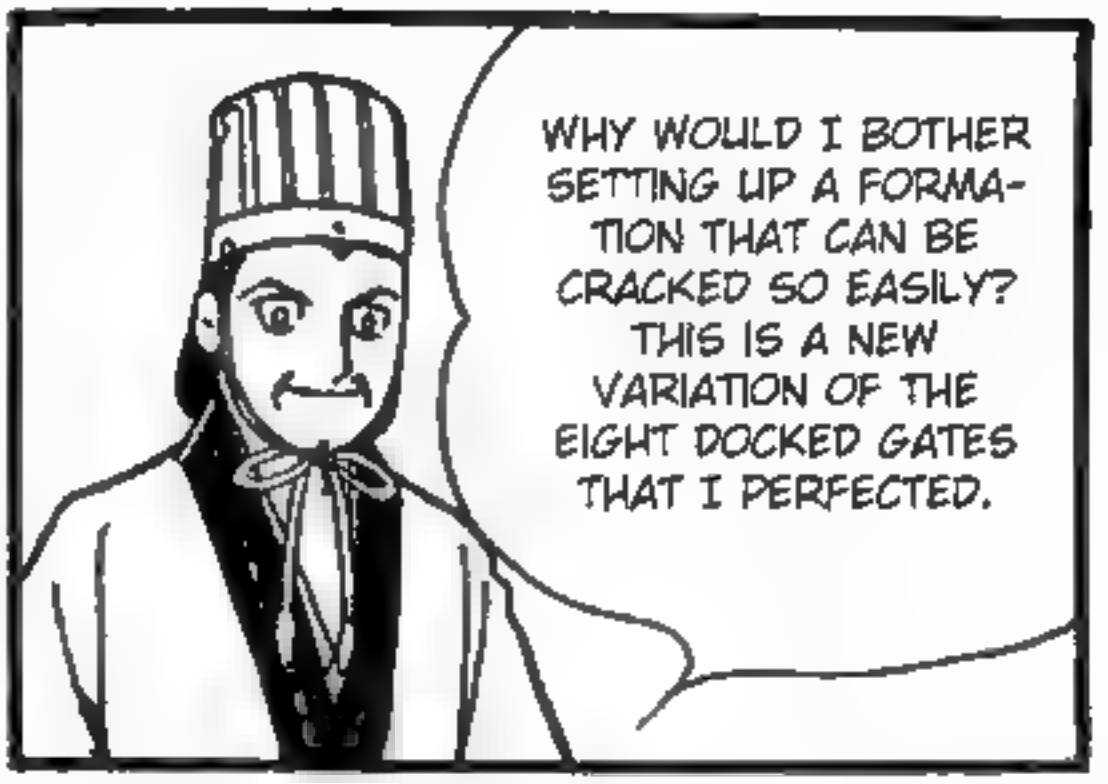
AND YUE CHEN MOUNTED A FIERCE ATTACK ON THE SURVIVE DESIST AND LIBERATE GATES AS INSTRUCTED

HOWEVER, NO MATTER WHERE THEY CHARGED, THEY WERE BLOCKED BY DENSE WALLS OF SHU INFANTRY
WITH THE MULTITUDE OF GATES IN EVERY DIRECTION THEY SOON LOST THEIR SENSE OF DIRECTION. THE PANICKED WEI TROOPS BECAME LOST IN THE MAZE-LIKE FORMATION

WHEN THE THREE CAME TO, THEY REALIZED THEY WERE SURROUNDED ON ALL SIDES WITH FEW TROOPS REMAINING
THIS WAS NOT THE SAME EIGHT DOCKED GATES FORMATION THE ANCIENTS KNEW. IT WAS A NEW VARIATION THAT KONGMING HAD RECENTLY DEVELOPED


HAHAHA. DID SIMA YI TELL YOU MY FORMATION WOULD EASILY CRUMBLE IF YOU ATTACKED DESIST, SURVIVE, AND LIBERATION?

STRIP THESE MEN AND LET THEM GO.


WHY WOULD I BOTHER SETTING UP A FORMATION THAT CAN BE CRACKED SO EASILY? THIS IS A NEW VARIATION OF THE EIGHT DOCKED GATES THAT I PERFECTED.

IT WAS A SIMPLE TASK. WE NEED NOT REGRET RELEASING THESE PETTY OFFICERS.

AFTER WE WENT THROUGH THE TROUBLE OF ARRESTING THEM?

WHEN YOU GET BACK, BE SURE TO TELL SIMA YI FOR ME THAT HE WILL NEVER CRACK MY EIGHT DOCKED GATES WITH SUCH MEAGRE WISDOM. HE OUGHT TO STUDY HIS MILITARY STRATEGY AND TACTICS A LITTLE MORE BEFORE HE CHALLENGES ME AGAIN.

NOW BEGONE!

HAHAHAHA

AHAHAHA!

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YES, SIR...

HE TOLD ME TO HIT THE BOOKS!?

I WILL RESPOND TO HIS ARROGANCE BY LEADING THE ATTACK MYSELF AND CRUSHING THE FORMATION HE TAKES SUCH PRIDE IN!

YOUR HUMILIATION IS DIRECTED AT ME. KONGMING WISHED TO INSULT ME EVEN FURTHER.

SEND THE SIGNAL FOR A FULL-OUT ATTACK!

HEAR ME, TROOPS OF WEI! HOW CAN ANY OF US RETURN HOME AFTER RECEIVING SUCH HUMILIATION? LET US CRUSH THE ENEMIES TO RECLAIM OUR HONOUR AND RETURN HOME WITH OUR HEADS HELD HIGH!

ALL THE WEI OFFICERS
CHARGED WITH THE
SAME FURY AS SIMA YI
IN RESPONSE TO
KONGMING'S INSULT

PREPARE TO MEET THEM HEAD ON!

EXCELLENT.

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CHANCELLOR! THE WEI ARMY IS COMING AT US IN FULL-FORCE, LED BY SIMA YI!

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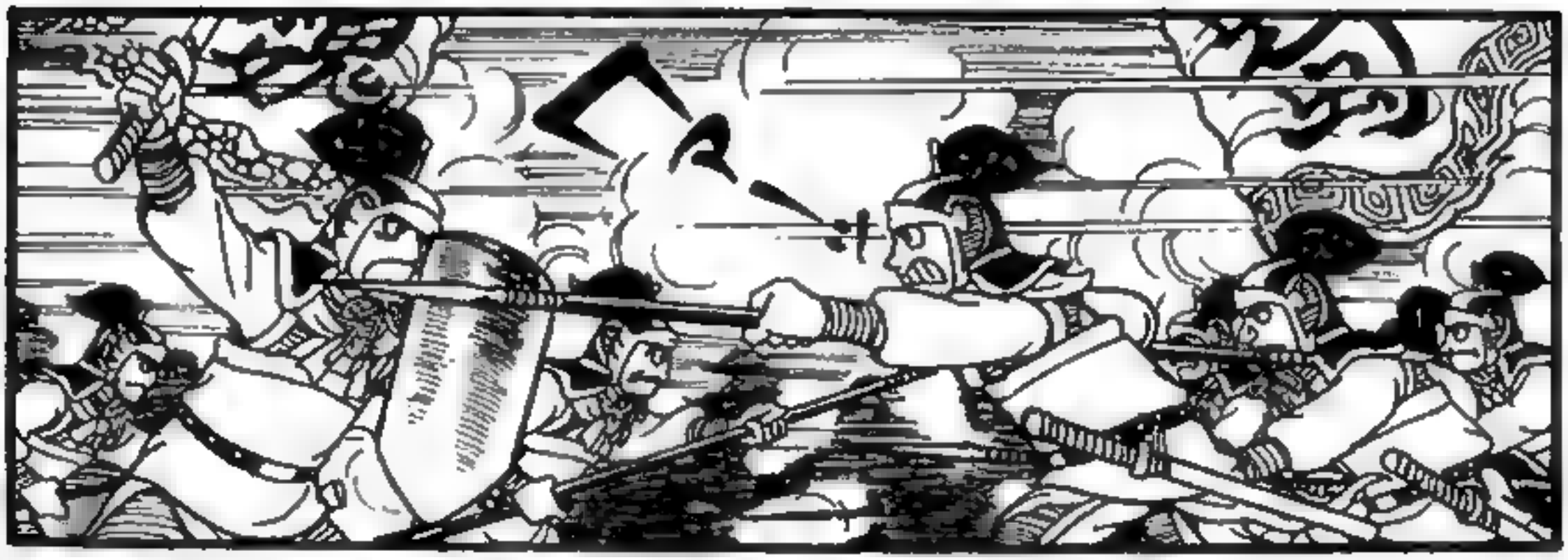


HM?
?

COME ON! SHOW SOME MORE SPIRIT!

SIR! ENEMY TROOPS LED BY GUAN XING ARE COMING FROM THE SOUTHWEST!

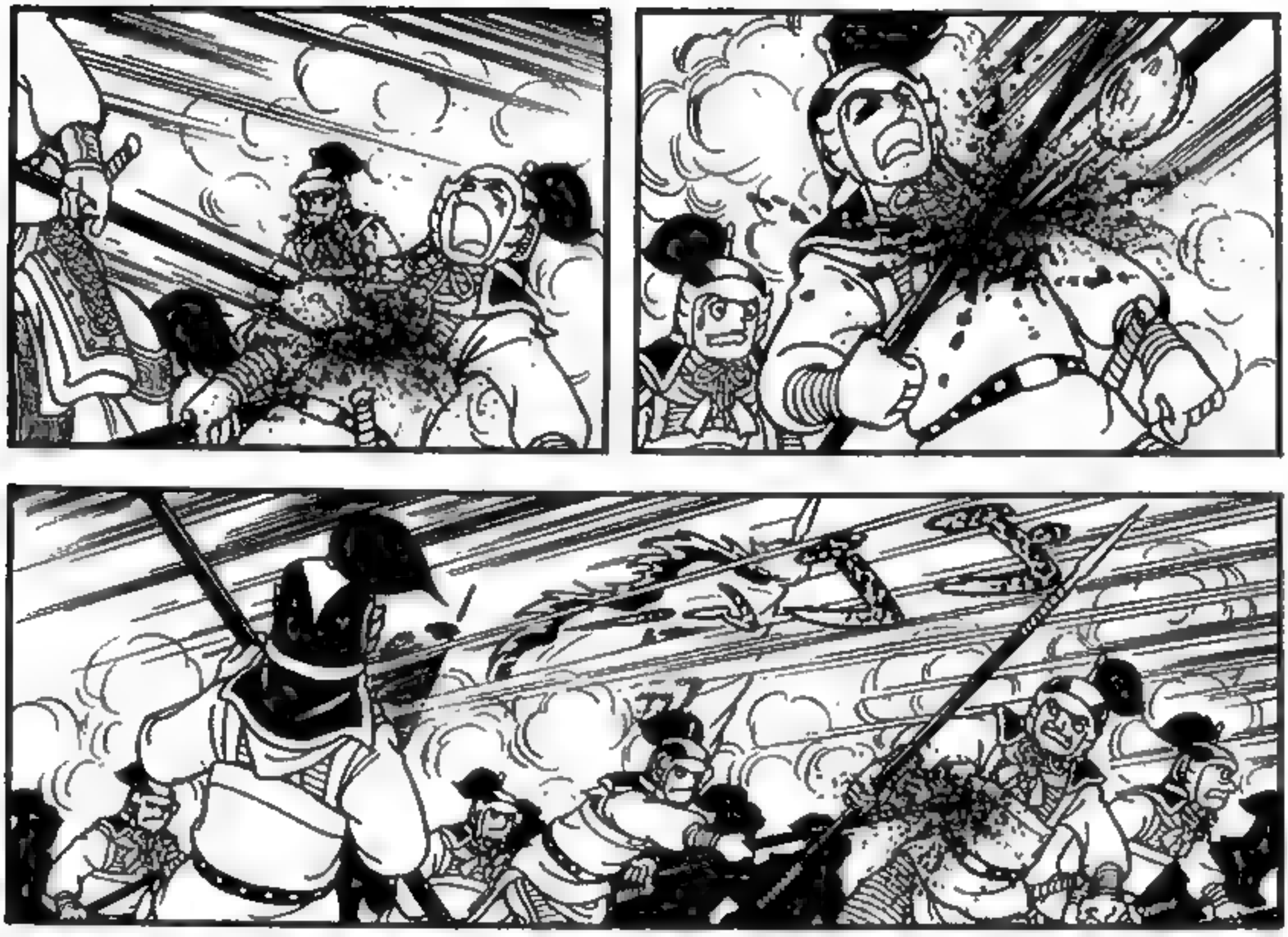
YES, SIR.

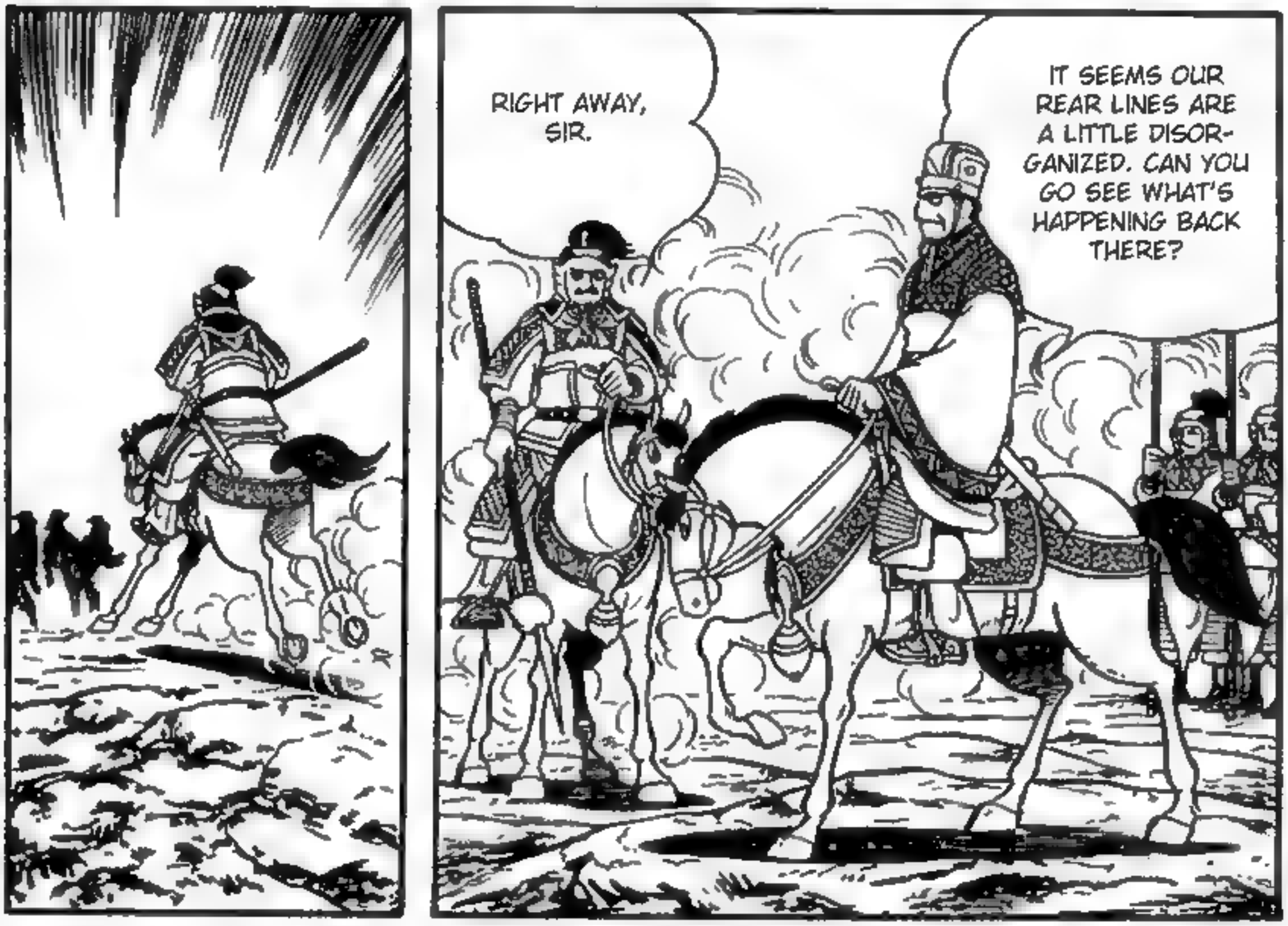
SEND THE RESERVES TO COUNTER THEM!

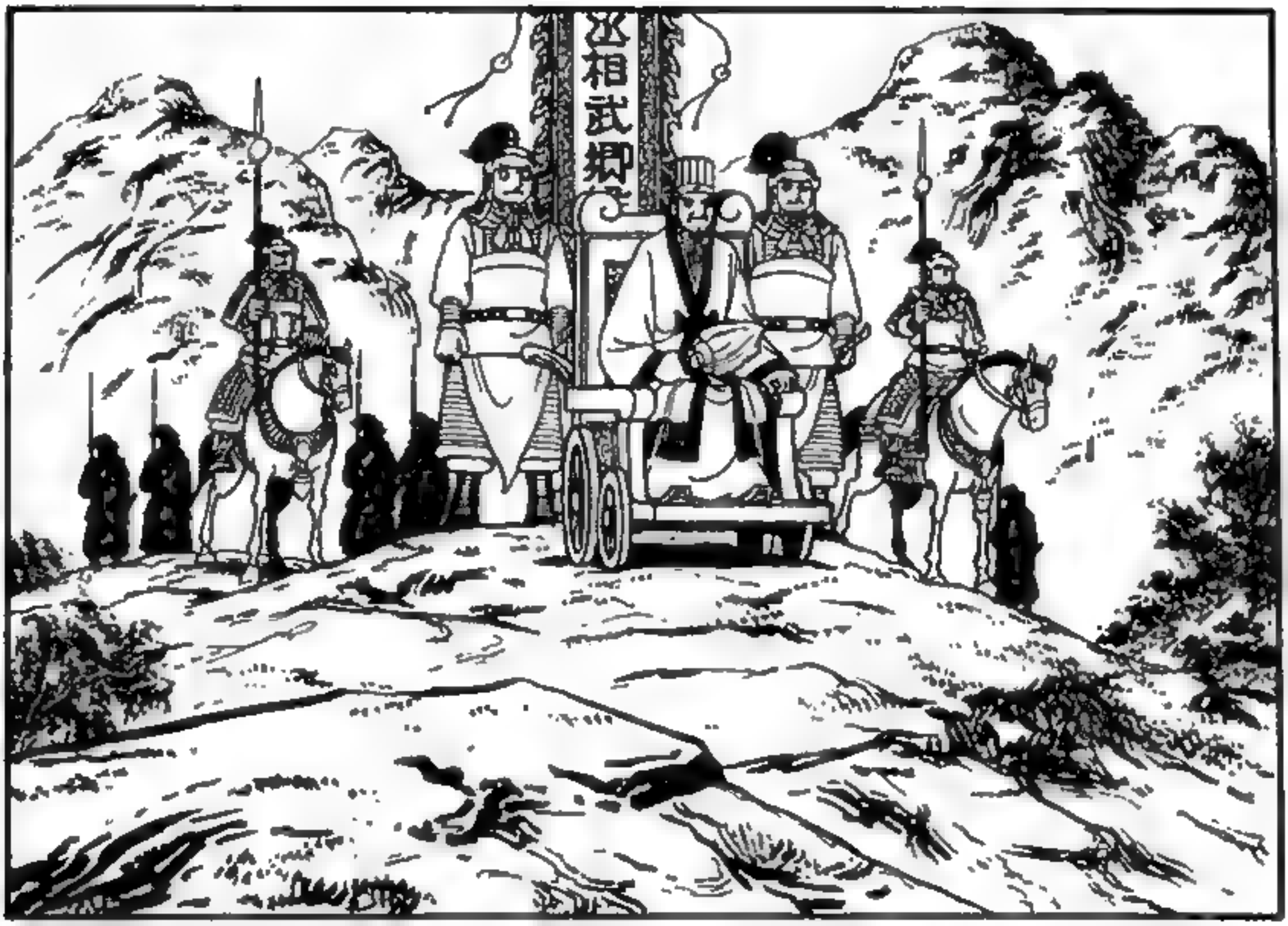
WHAT!

RESERVES! QUICKLY MOVE TO COUNTER THE NEW ENEMY TROOPS!

FASTER, MEN! THE ENEMIES ARE STILL UNAWARE OF OUR PRESENCE! LET US TAKE THEM BY A STORM!




RIGHT AWAY, SIR.
IT SEEMS OUR REAR LINES ARE A LITTLE DISORGANIZED. CAN YOU GO SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING BACK THERE?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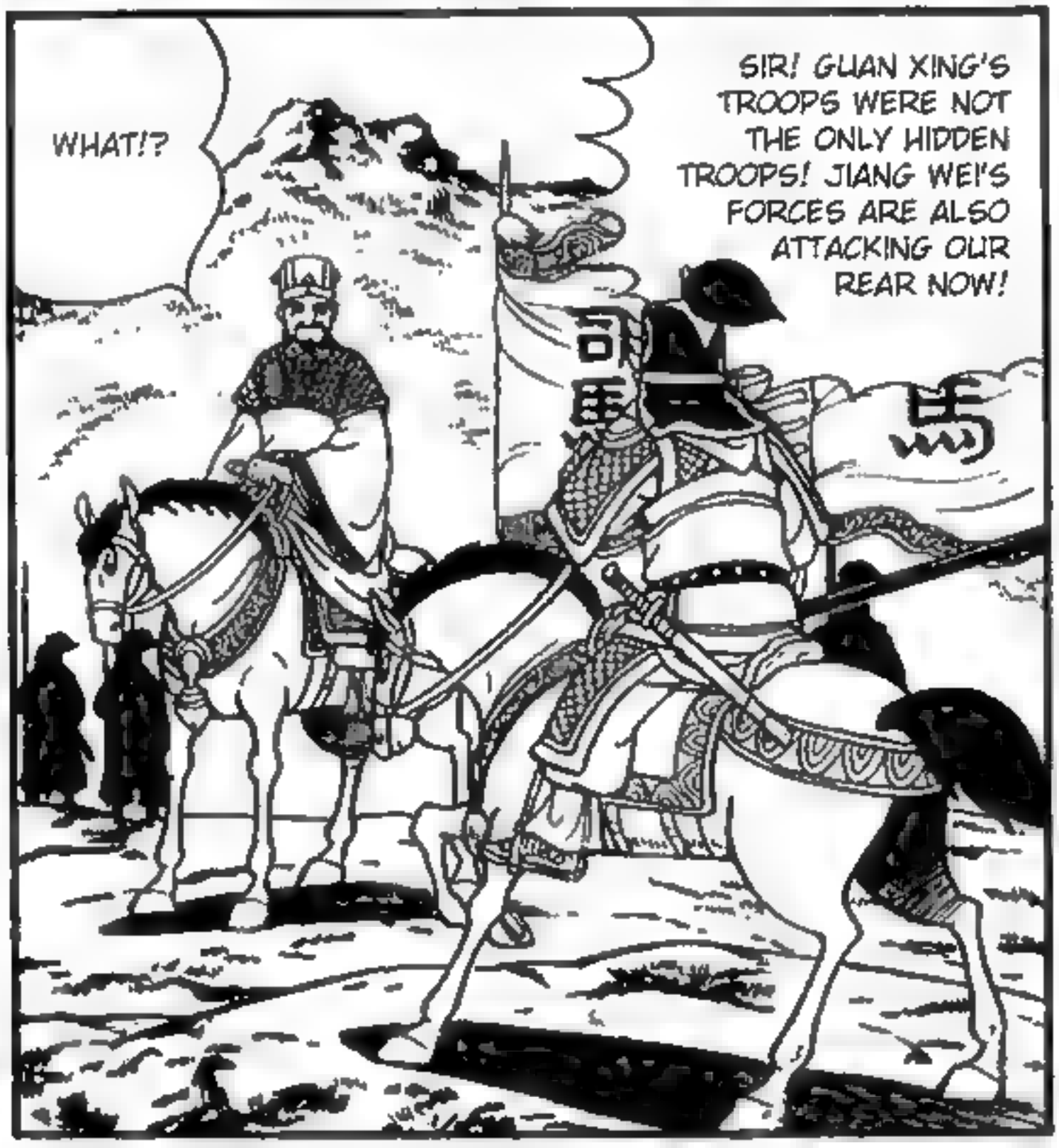
WHAT!?
SIR! GUAN XING'S TROOPS WERE NOT THE ONLY HIDDEN TROOPS! JIANG WEI'S FORCES ARE ALSO ATTACKING OUR REAR NOW!
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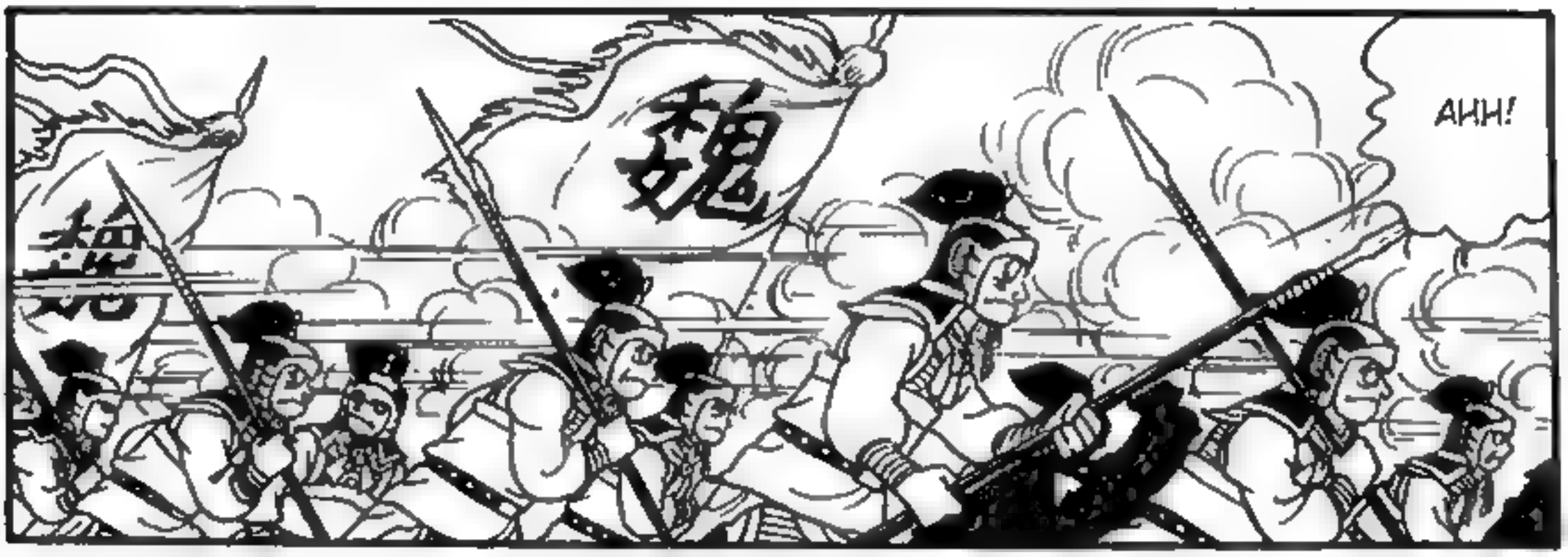
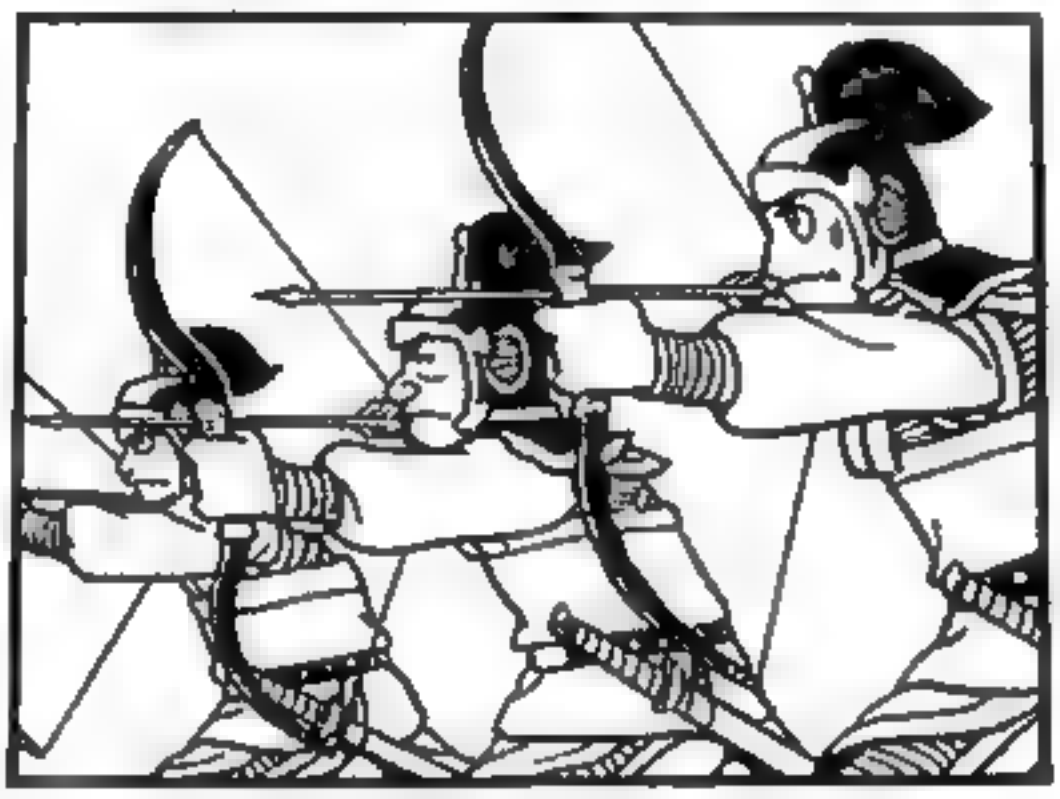
"

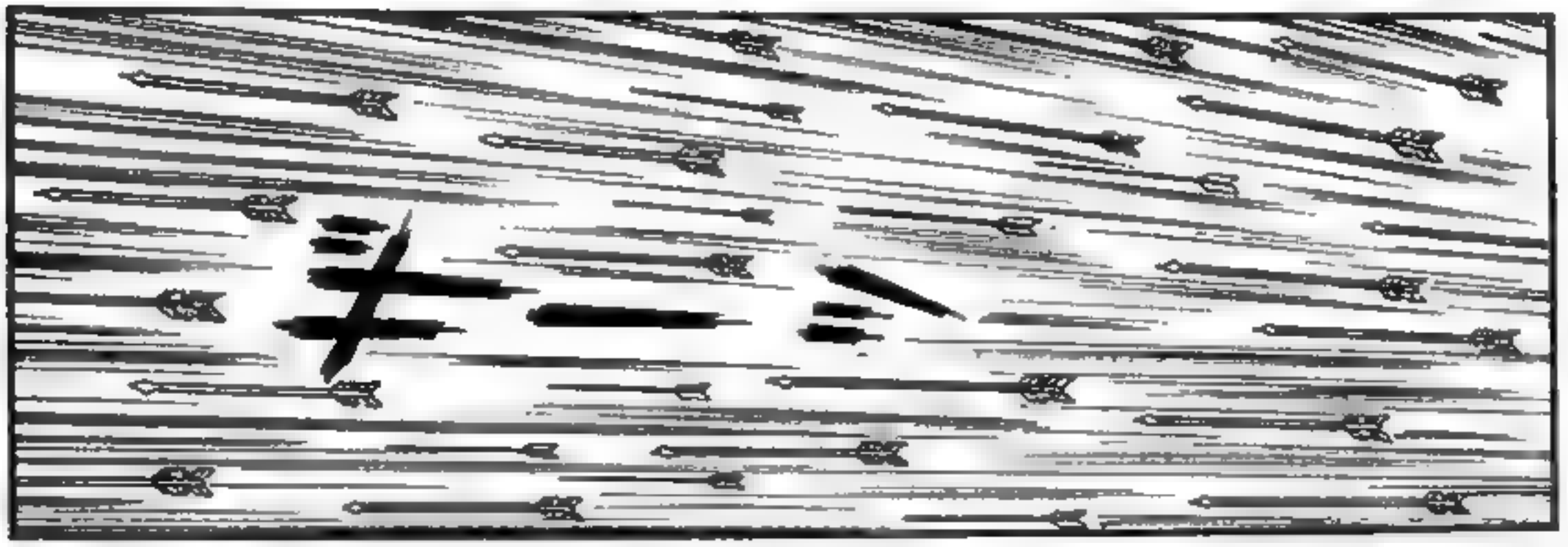
AGHH! HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO BLIND!? KONGMING'S INSULT WAS ONLY TO LURE OUR FORCES FORWARD!

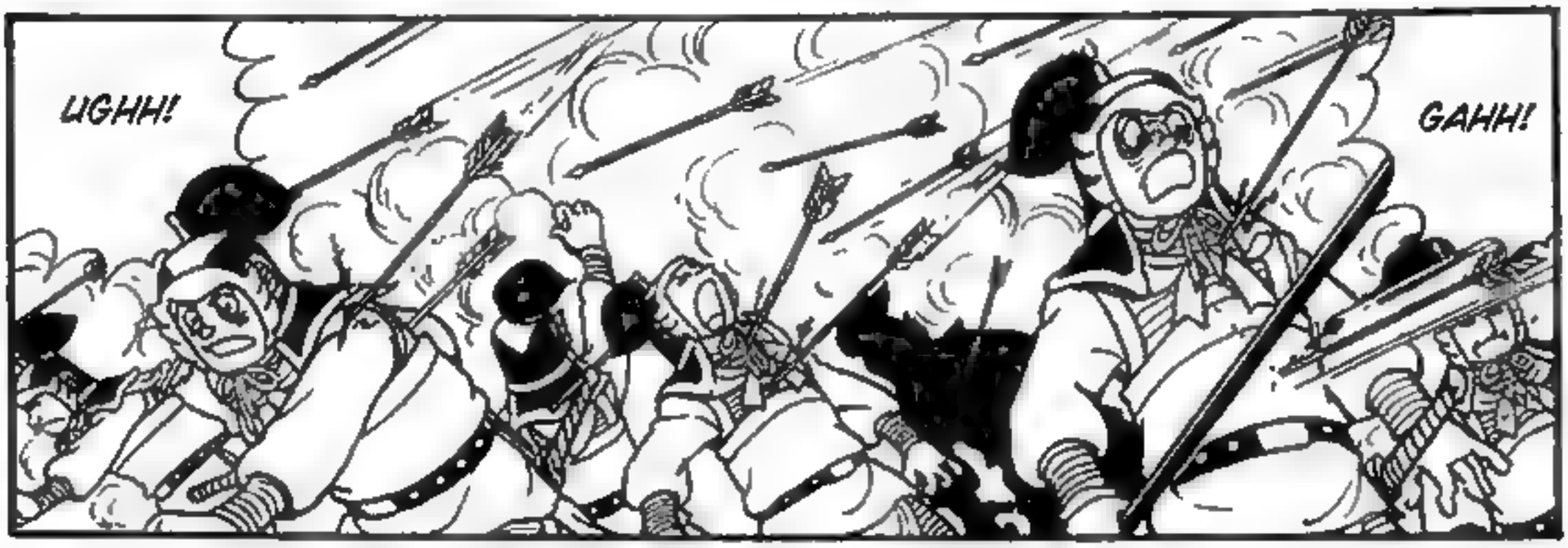
O-OUR ARMY IS BEING ATTACKED FROM 3 DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS!?

RETREAT! RETREAT! WE CANNOT SIMPLY DO AS KONGMING WISHES!

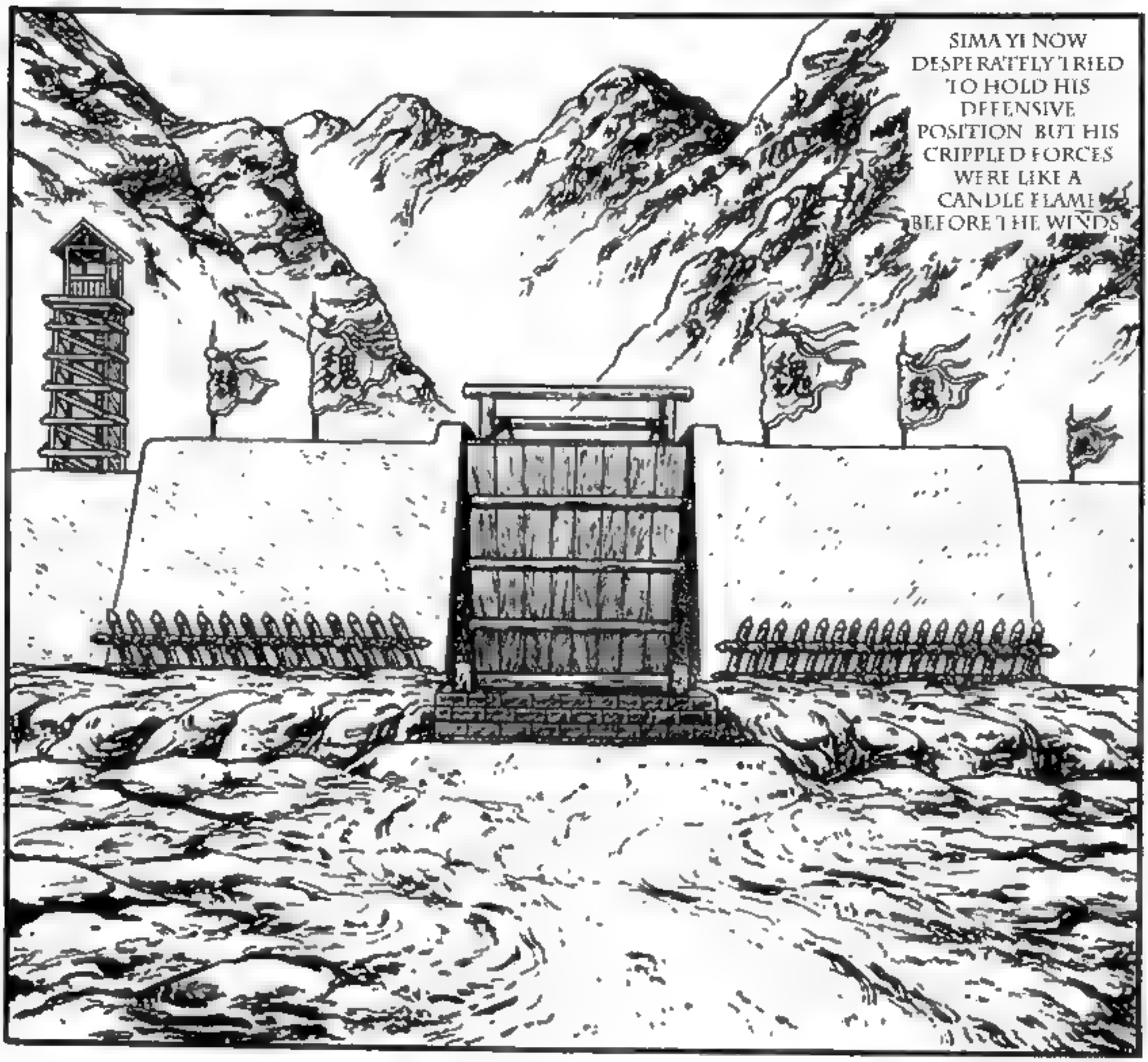

AHH!



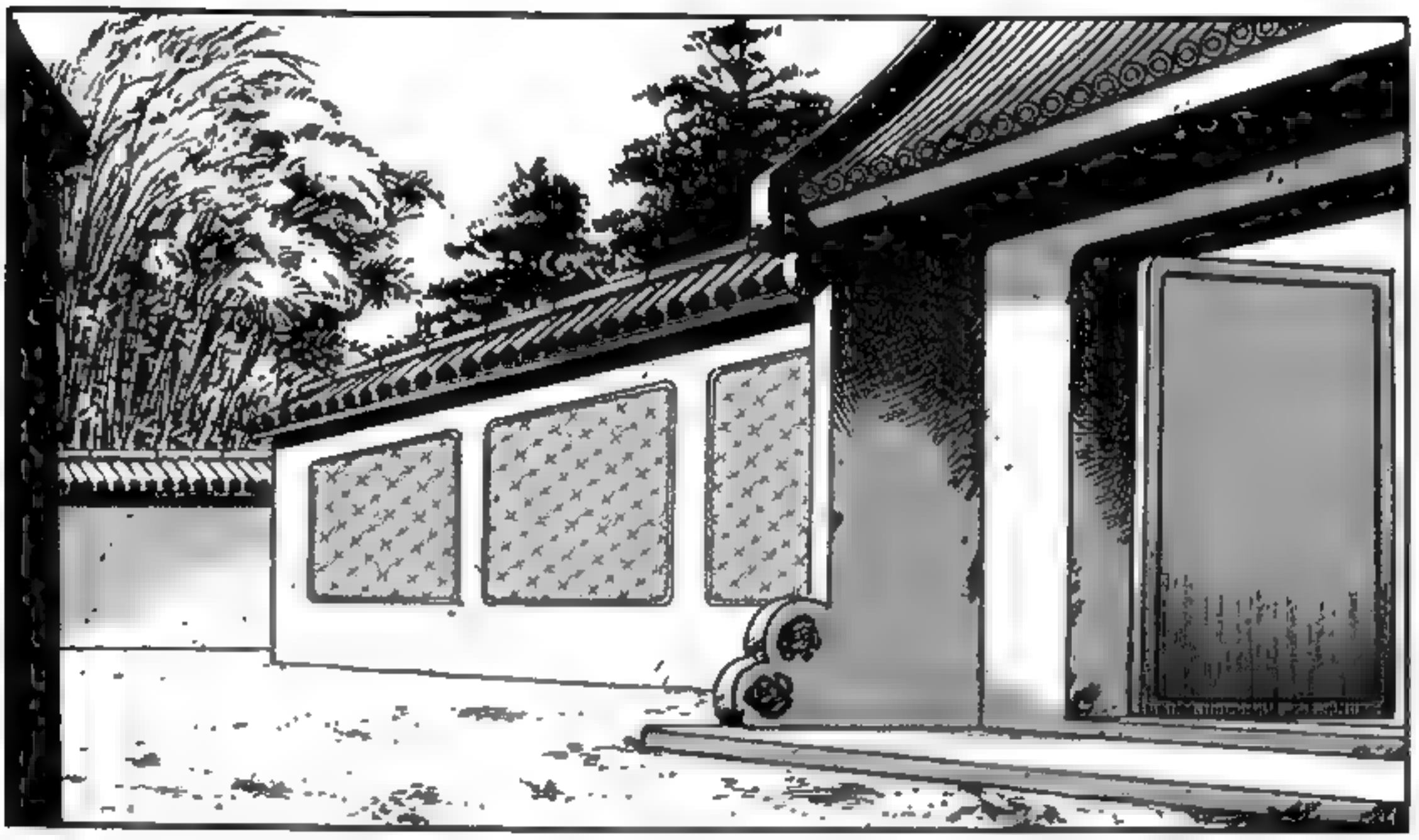



UGHH!
GAHH!

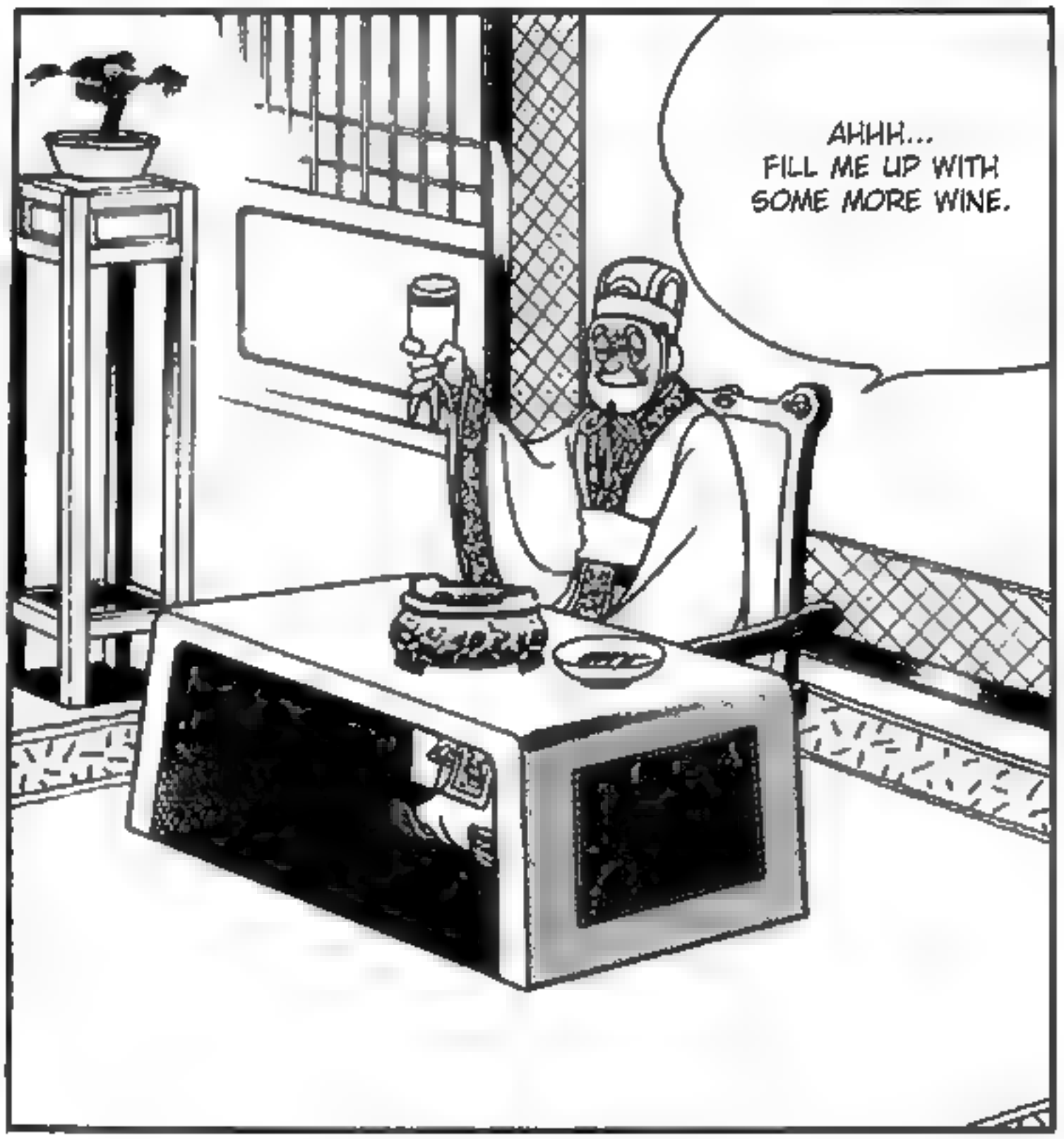
SIMA YI S
CASUALTIES FROM
THIS BATTLE
-NUMBERED CLOSE
TO 70%.


SIMA YI NOW
DESPERATELY TRIED
TO HOLD HIS
DEFENSIVE
POSITION BUT HIS
CRIPPLED FORCES
WERE LIKE A
CANDLE FLAME
BEFORE THE WINDS

RESENTMENT



OFFICER GOU AN. I BELIEVE YOU SHOULD DEPART NOW LEST YOU DELAY THE SCHEDULE EVEN FURTHER.


AHHH... FILL ME UP WITH SOME MORE WINE.

BUT SIR! A DELIVERY 3 DAYS LATE CAN MEAN IMPRISONMENT, AND A 5-DAY DELAY CAN MEAN EXECUTION!

DON'T WORRY, DON'T WORRY. I HEARD OUR ARMY'S BATTLIN' THE WEI ARMY RIGHT NOW. HOW'S A MERE GRAIN CONVOY S'POSED TO GET NEAR A DANGEROUS BATTLEFIELD?

WHAT A DRUNK...

OFF I GO THEN...

OH, FINE, FINE. I'LL LEAVE ALREADY IF YOU'LL QUIT YER NAGGIN'.

YES, SIR.

THE GRAIN CONVOY ARRIVED ONLY NOW!?

A MAN NAMED GOU AN, SIR.

THAT'S 10 DAYS LATE! WHO IN HEAVENS IS THE HEAD OF THIS CONVOY!?

YES, SIR.

BRING HIM BEFORE ME AT ONCE.

THE CHANCELLOR CALLS FOR YOUR PRESENCE, GOU AN.

GOU AN, YOU ARE AWARE THAT ANY SUPPLY CONVOY 3-DAYS LATE CAN LEAD TO IMPRISONMENT, AND ONE THAT'S 5-DAYS LATE CAN MEAN EXECUTION, YES?

YES, CHANCELLOR?

VERY WELL, THEN LET ME ASK WHY YOU ARRIVED 10 DAYS LATE.

YES, SIR, I AM AWARE OF THE PUNISHMENTS.

YOU HID IN THE HILLS UNTIL THE BATTLE WAS OVER...?

HEARING THAT OUR ARMY WAS IN THE MIDST OF A GREAT BATTLE WITH THE ENEMIES ALONG THE WEI RIVER, I THOUGHT IT NOT PRUDENT FOR A MERE GRAIN CONVOY TO APPROACH A BATTLEFIELD, LEST RISK THE GRAIN BEING STOLEN. THUS, I LAY LOW IN THE HILLS UNTIL I HEARD THE BATTLE WAS OVER.

SINCE DELIVERING THE GRAIN SUCCESS-FULLY IS OF UTMOST PRIORITY, I LAY LOW IN THE HILLS TO ENSURE THE ENEMIES COULD NOT STEAL IT, CHANCELLOR.

WARS ARE FOUGHT AND LOST BY GRAIN! THUS, DELIVERING GRAIN IS NO MERE SIDE-ACTION, BUT A CENTRAL PART OF WAGING WAR ITSELF! HOW DARE YOU COWARDLY HIDE YOURSELF WHILE OTHER OFFICERS WERE RISKING THEIR LIVES IN BATTLE!?

SILENCE! IS YOUR APPEARANCE THAT OF A MAN WHO TOOK REFUGE IN THE WILDERNESS FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS!? I CAN TELL BY YOUR EYES AND CHEEKS THAT YOU'RE STILL IN A DRUNKEN STUPOR!

AGHH!

HOW DARE YOU LIE TO COVER UP YOUR DRINKING HOLIDAY! EXECUTE THIS MAN, AS PER THE LAW!

ABSOLUTELY NOT!

F-FORGIVE ME, SIR!

CHANCEL-LOR!

YES, YANG YI?

OH NO...

THIS WAY, PAL.

GOU AN IS A VALUED ATTENDANT TO LI YAN. THUS, EXECUTING HIM MAY ALIENATE LI YAN FROM YOU, CHANCELLOR.

WHY?

MAY I ASK YOU TO LIGHTEN GOU AN'S SENTENCE?

WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT IT IS THANKS TO LI YAN'S EFFORTS THAT GRAIN IS EFFICIENTLY GATHERED IN SHU AND SENT ALL THE WAY OUT HERE TO THE BATTLEFRONT. IF LI YAN WERE TO TAKE PERSONAL OFFENSE TO GOU AN'S EXECUTION, THE CONSEQUENCES ON OUR CAMPAIGN MAY BE DISASTROUS.

YANG YI, DID I NOT REFUSE TO PLAY FAVOURITES BY EXECUTING MA SU WHEN HE MADE A MAJOR BLUNDER? DID I ALSO NOT RECENTLY SENTENCE CHEN SHI TO DEATH? WERE IT NOT FOR MY DETERMINATION TO UPHOLD THE LAW NO MATTER WHAT, OUR ARMY COULD NOT MAINTAIN ITS HIGH LEVEL OF DISCIPLINE. AND WITHOUT DISCIPLINE, CONQUERING THE WEI AND RESTORING THE HAN IS IMPOSSIBLE.

HM...

MNN... STILL, I CANNOT SIMPLY COVER UP THIS MATTER.

BUT IF YOU EXECUTE GOU AN, MANY OFFICERS WILL NOT WISH TO HEAD A SUPPLY CONVOY IN FEAR OF THEIR LIVES.

YES, SIR.

VERY WELL, I WILL REDUCE HIS SENTENCE TO EIGHTY BLOWS WITH A WOODEN STICK INSTEAD.

THUS, AT THE COST OF 80 SEVERE BLOWS, GOU AN WAS SPARED HIS LIFE

UGHH... BRING ME SOME OINTMENT!

OWW OWW! WOULD IT KILL YOU TO BE MORE GENTLE!?

YES.

WILL THAT BE ALL, SIR?

WHAT KIND OF TREATMENT IS THIS!? I WAS ONLY 10 DAYS LATE, AND IT'S NOT AS IF THEY WERE RUNNING LOW ON SUPPLIES HERE!

YES, SIR.

NO, BRING ME SOME WINE AS WELL.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I WAS PUBLICLY BEATEN AND HUMILIATED! CURSE THAT ARROGANT KONGMING!

THAT NIGHT
GOU AN AND A FEW OF HIS ATTENDANTS SNUCK OUT OF THE SHU CAMPS,
AND MADE THEIR WAY TO THE WEI CAMPS

I UNDERSTAND YOUR SITUATION.

BUT KONGMING'S CUNNING KNOWS NO LIMITS. I CANNOT SIMPLY TAKE YOUR WORDS AT FACE-VALUE.

YES, I'LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES!

IF YOU SUCCEED IN AIDING OUR ARMY, I WILL PERSONALLY SEE TO IT THAT THE WEI EMPEROR WILL HONOUR YOU GREATLY WITH A POST.

IF YOU CAN MANAGE TO GET KONGMING RECALLED TO CHENGDU, THEN I WILL RECOGNIZE YOUR DEEDS AND KEEP MY PROMISE.

YES, AND AT THE SHU CAPITAL, I WANT YOU TO SPREAD A RUMOUR THAT KONGMING IS PLOTTING TO MAKE HIMSELF THE NEW SHU EMPEROR.

THEN RETURN TO CHENGDU.

CHENGDU?

THEN LEAVE FOR CHENGDU RIGHT AWAY.

UNDERSTOOD. I WILL DO ALL THAT I CAN, SIR.

THUS, GOU AN HURRIED BACK TO CHENGDU TO CARRY OUT SIMA YI'S PLOT

HAHA, I HAVE HEARD EMPEROR LIU SHAN WAS A FOOLISH MAN. IF THINGS GO WELL AND KONGMING WERE TO BE DISMISSED, THEN I CAN DESTROY SHU IN AN INSTANT!

THROWING AWAY A VICTORY

CHENGDU
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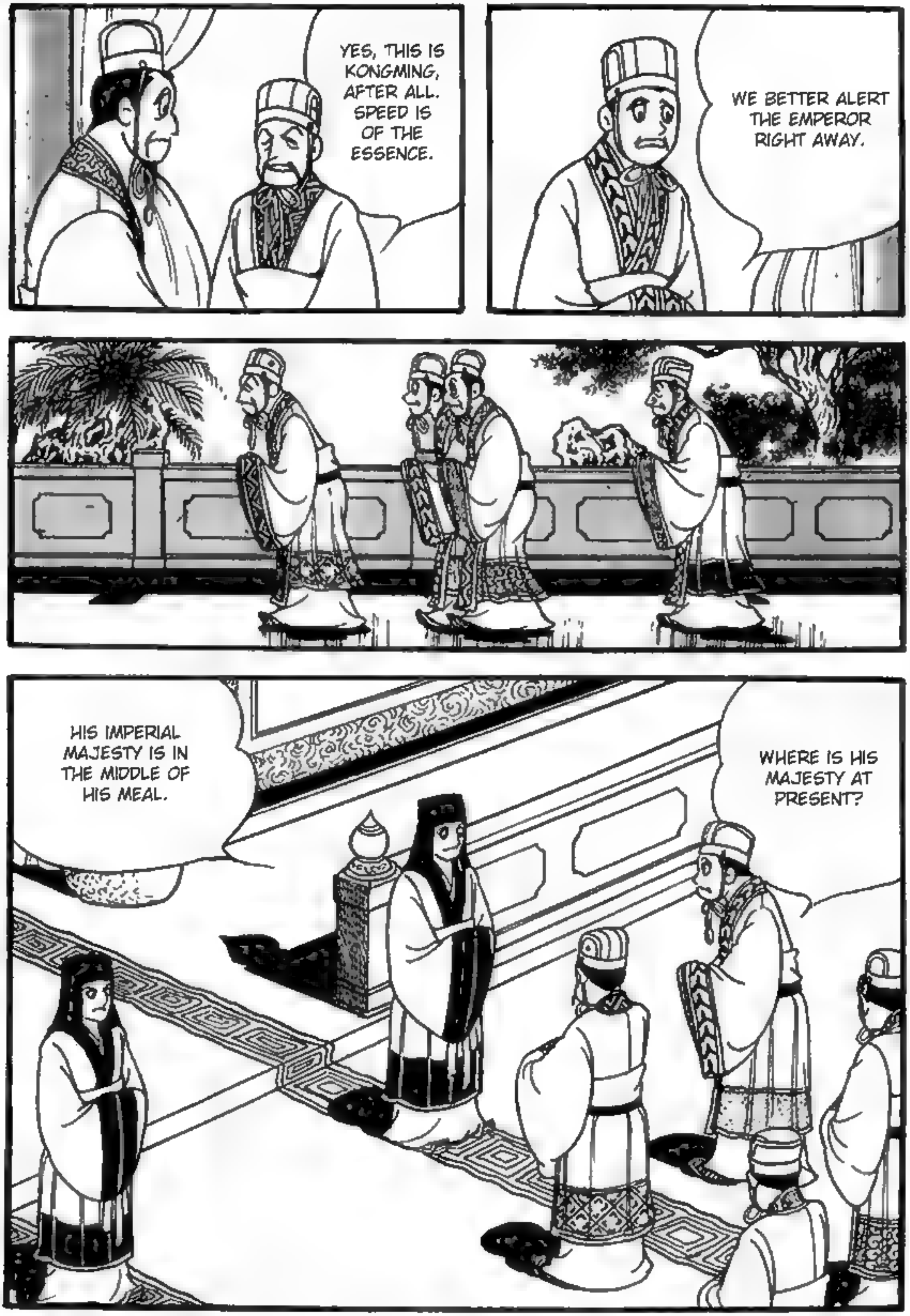
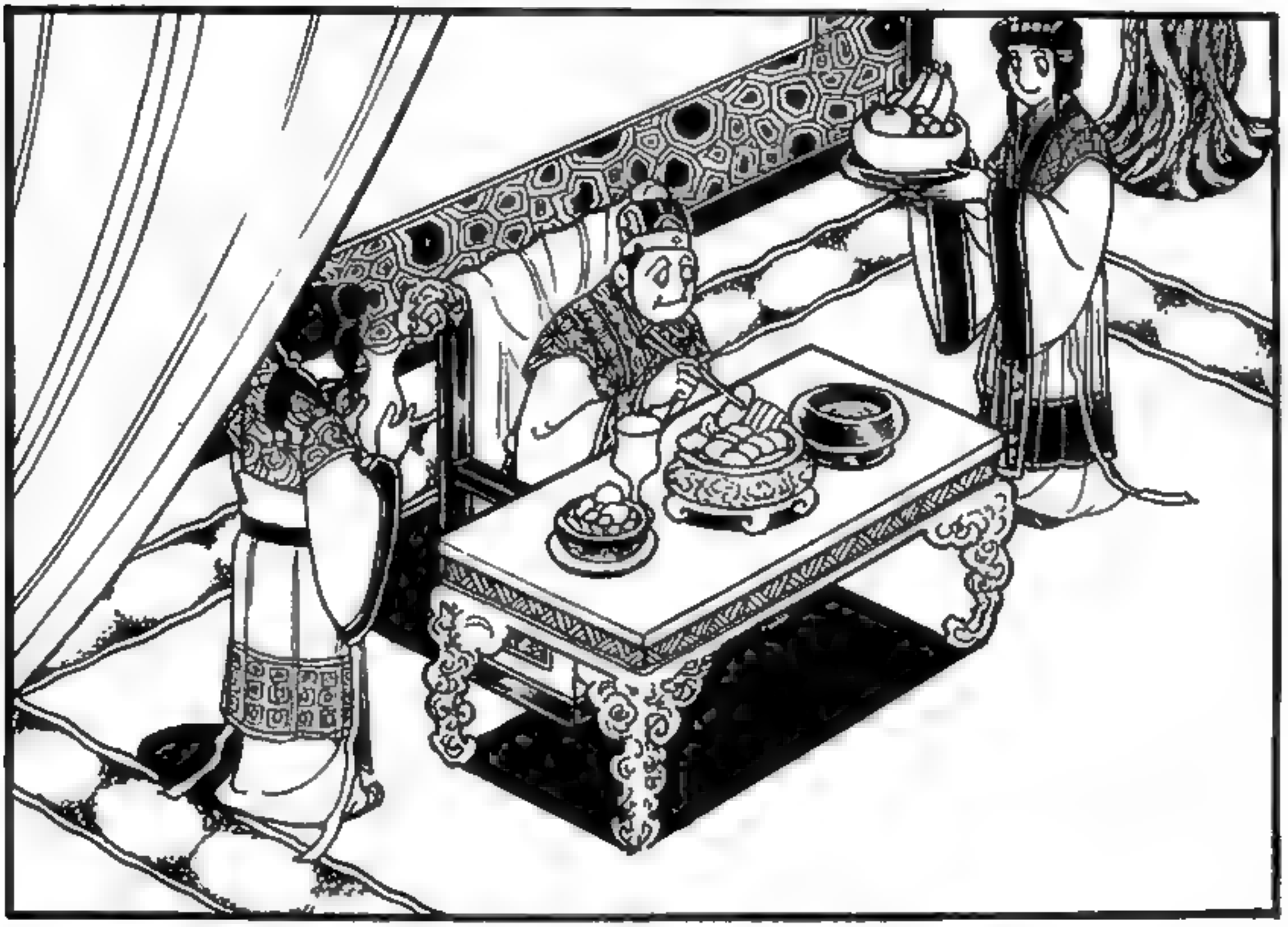
AS THE CHANCELLOR AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF ALL ARMED FORCES, IT'D ONLY BE TOO EASY FOR HIM!
YES, I'VE HEARD THE RUMOURS.
HAVE YOU HEARD!? APPARENTLY, THE CHANCELLOR IS PLOTTING A COUP D'ETAT!


YES, THIS IS KONGMING, AFTER ALL. SPEED IS OF THE ESSENCE.
WE BETTER ALERT THE EMPEROR RIGHT AWAY.
HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS MEAL.
WHERE IS HIS MAJESTY AT PRESENT?

YES, PLEASE WAIT HERE FOR A MOMENT.

PLEASE TELL HIM THAT HIS EUNUCHS HAVE AN URGENT REPORT TO BRING TO HIS ATTENTION.



IS YOUR MAJESTY PERHAPS NOT DRINKING TOO MUCH? I FEAR FOR YOUR MAJESTY'S HEALTH.

POUR ME ANOTHER ME CUP!

WORRY NOT, I AM STILL YOUNG. WINE CAN BE MORE EFFECTIVE AT PROMOTING A MAN'S VIGOUR THAN ANY MEDICINE.

HAHA, WORRIED FOR MY HEALTH, ARE YOU NOW, YOU CUTE LITTLE THING!

YOUR EUNUCHS SAY THEY HAVE URGENT NEWS TO REPORT.

URGENT NEWS?

WHAT IS IT? CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BUSY ENJOYING MY MEAL?

YOUR MAJESTY.

YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

VERY WELL, LET THEM IN.

I ASSUME THIS NEWS MUST BE QUITE URGENT THEN, YES?

PLEASE PARDON US FOR INTRUDING DURING YOUR MAJESTY'S MEAL.

WHAT!?

YES, WE'VE HEARD THAT THE CHANCELLOR IS CURRENTLY PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW YOUR MAJESTY AND PLACE HIMSELF AS THE NEW EMPEROR.

EVERYONE AT COURT AND THE PALACE ARE TALKING ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW.

A-ARE YOU SURE!?

T-THEN WHAT DO I DO...!?

IF KONGMING WERE TO TURN THE ARMY AROUND AND MARCH FOR CHENGDU, THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO!

R-RIGHT, I WILL DO SO AT ONCE!

YOU MUST RECALL HIM TO THE CAPITAL AND DISMISS HIM FROM HIS POST.

IT IS TOO DANGEROUS TO LEAVE KONGMING WITH ABSOLUTE POWER OVER BOTH CIVIL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS.

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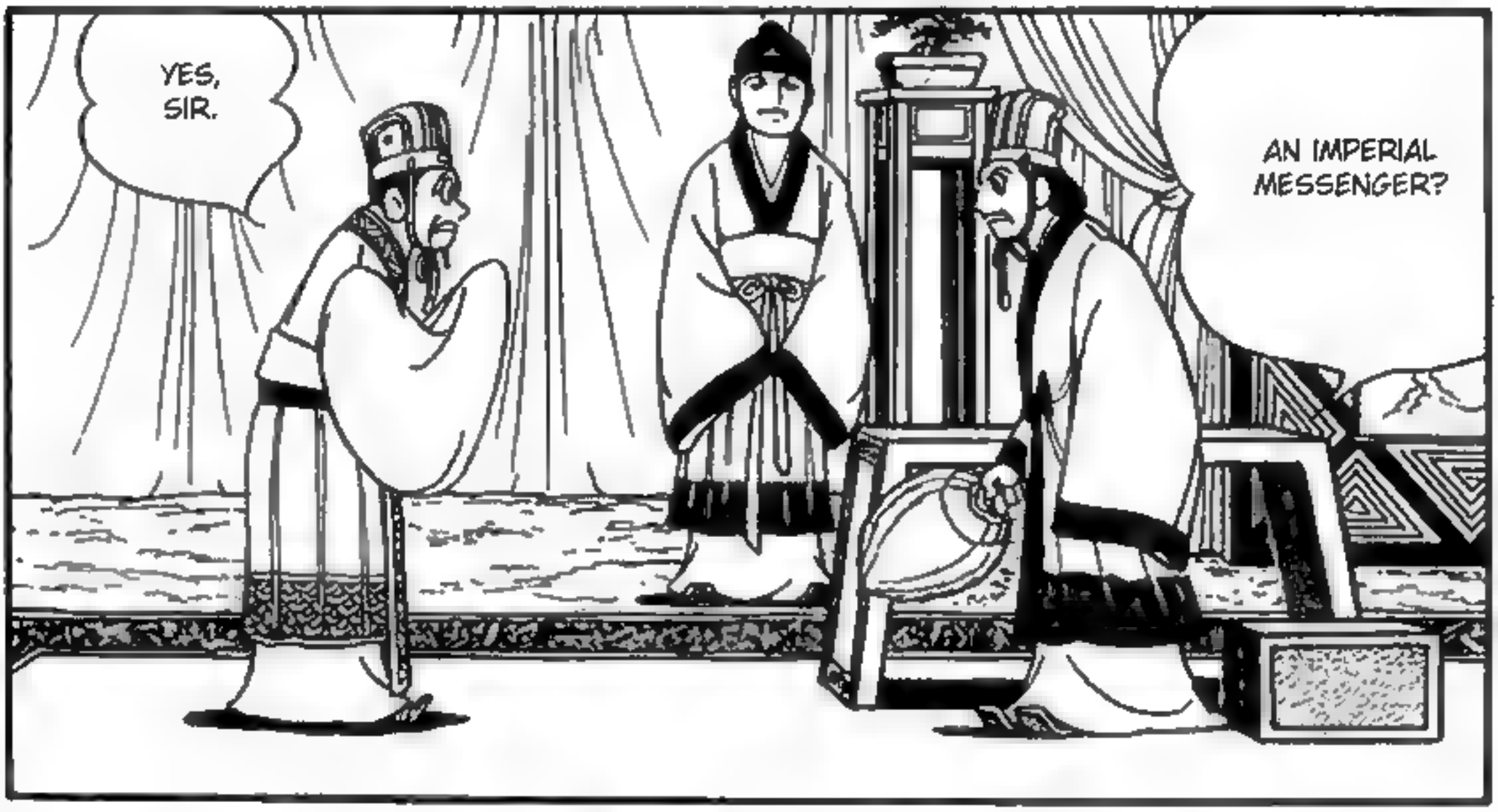
YES, SIR.
AN IMPERIAL MESSENGER?
YES, SIR.
PREPARE TO RECEIVE THE IMPERIAL MESENGER WITH UTMOST COURTESY.

YES, HIS MAJESTY HAS SENT ME HERE TO DELIVER AN URGENT ORDER.

THANK YOU FOR COMING ALL THE WAY OUT HERE TO DELIVER HIS MAJESTY'S MESSAGE.

WHAT!?

YOU ARE TO WITHDRAW YOUR ARMY AND RETURN TO CHENGDU AT ONCE.

I'M AFRAID THOSE ARE HIS MAJESTY'S ORDERS. SEE FOR YOURSELF.

BUT WE JUST SCORED A MAJOR VICTORY! ALL WE NEED IS ONE MORE PUSH TO CLEAR THE ROAD TO CHANG'AN!

...VERY WELL. I WILL DO AS HIS MAJESTY COMMANDS.

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BUT ***NOW*** OF ALL TIMES!? THE WEI ARMY HOLDING OUT AGAINST US IS BARELY A THIRD OF WHAT THEY ORIGINALLY HAD!

IT'S AN ORDER FROM HIS MAJESTY. I MUST OBEY.

DO YOU REALLY PLAN TO WITHDRAW, CHANCELLOR?

HOWEVER, IF WE WITHDRAW NOW, THE ENEMIES WILL BRING UP MORE REINFORCEMENTS TO SECURE THEIR LOST STRATEGIC AREAS ONCE AGAIN, MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR US TO ADVANCE ALL THE WAY BACK HERE AGAIN.

YES, I KNOW IF WE WERE TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE, WE WOULD SURELY MAKE IT TO CHANG'AN THIS TIME.

IT'S A LOT MORE COMPLICATED, WANG PING.

THEN WHY NOT EXPLAIN THE SITUA-

ME!? TAKE OVER THE THRONE!?

FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD, A RUMOUR THAT THE CHANCELLOR IS PLOTTING TO TAKE OVER THE THRONE IS CURRENTLY CIRCULATING AT THE PALACE.

SO THAT'S WHAT IS GOING ON BACK IN CHENGDU...

YES, I INITIALLY LAUGHED AT ITS ABSURDITY, BUT JUDGING BY THIS SUDDEN ORDER, IT SEEMS THE RUMOURS ARE BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY AT THE CAPITAL.

THEN THAT'S ALL THE MORE REASON FOR ME TO RETURN. IF I TRY TO MAKE EXCUSES, THAT WILL ONLY LEND CREDENCE TO THESE FALSE RUMOURS.

BUT WE'VE FINALLY COME SO CLOSE...

BREAK CAMP AND PREPARE TO WITHDRAW.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, IF WE ARE REALLY GOING TO RETREAT, HOW WILL WE DEAL WITH WEI'S INEVITABLE PURSUIT?

PERHAPS THIS, TOO, IS HEAVEN'S WILL.

WHEN YOU RETREAT, YOU WILL STEADILY INCREASE THE NUMBER OF COOKING FURNACES. FOR INSTANCE, IF YOU'RE LEADING 1000 TROOPS, YOU WILL MAKE 2000 FURNACES ON THE FIRST DAY. ON THE SECOND DAY, 4000 FURNACES, AND ON THE THIRD DAY, 6 OR 7000. THUS, WITH EACH DAY, YOU WILL INCREASE THE NUMBER.

WE WILL SPLIT UP INTO 5 DIVISIONS AND RETREAT BY SEPARATE PATHS.

IN THE DAYS OF OLD, THE FAMOUS STRATEGIST SUN BIN DECREASED THE NUMBER OF COOKING FURNACES TO TRICK PANG JUAN AND WIN A GREAT VICTORY AT THE BATTLE OF MALING.

YES?

MAY I ASK ONE QUESTION?

WELL NOTICED, JIANG WEI.

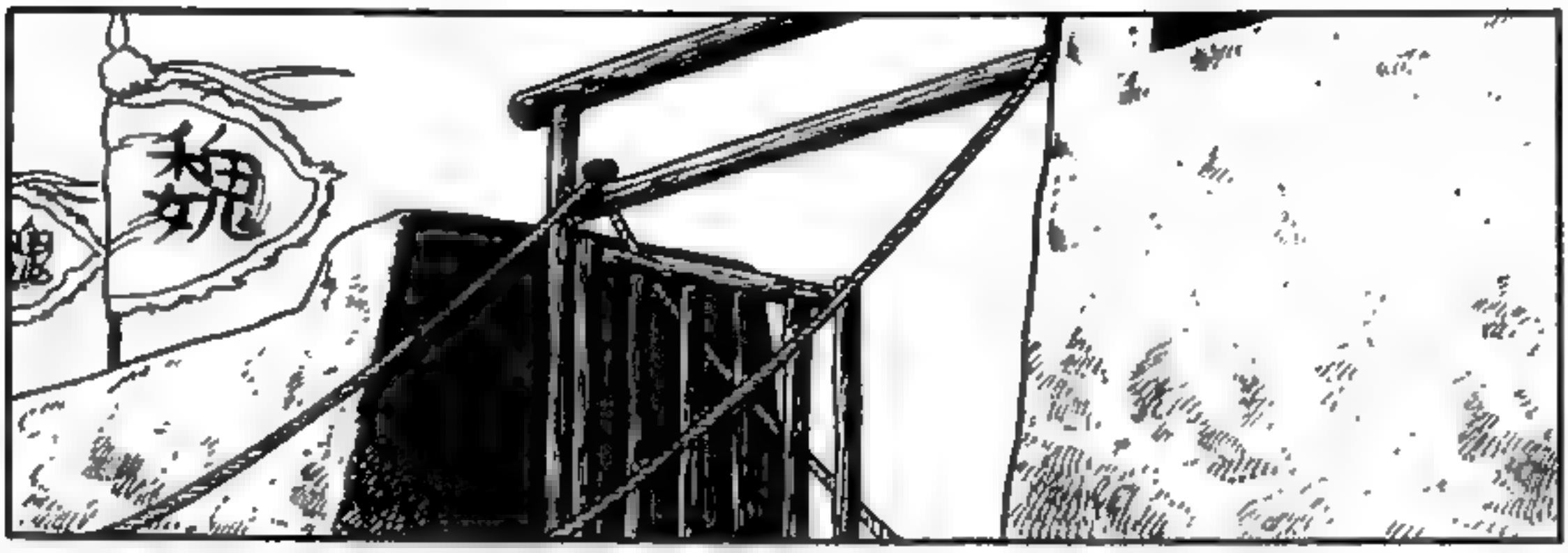
IT SEEMS YOU ARE APPLYING THE OPPOSITE OF HIS STRATEGY, BUT WHY?

I WILL KEEP YOUR ADVICE CLOSE AT HEART, SIR.

THE HIGHLY CAUTIOUS SIMA YI WILL BE SURE TO COUNT THE FURNACES TO GAUGE OUR RETREATING FORCES. IF HE SEES THAT THE NUMBER IS INCREASING BY DAY, HE WILL BE UNABLE TO SHAKE HIS DOUBTS THAT HE IS WALKING INTO ANOTHER TRAP.

LISTEN CAREFULLY, JIANG WEI. TO TRICK A WELL-LEARNED OPPONENT, YOU MUST USE HIS KNOWLEDGE AGAINST HIM.

WITH TEARS OF
REGRET, THE
SHU ARMY BEGAN
ITS MARCH
BACK HOME.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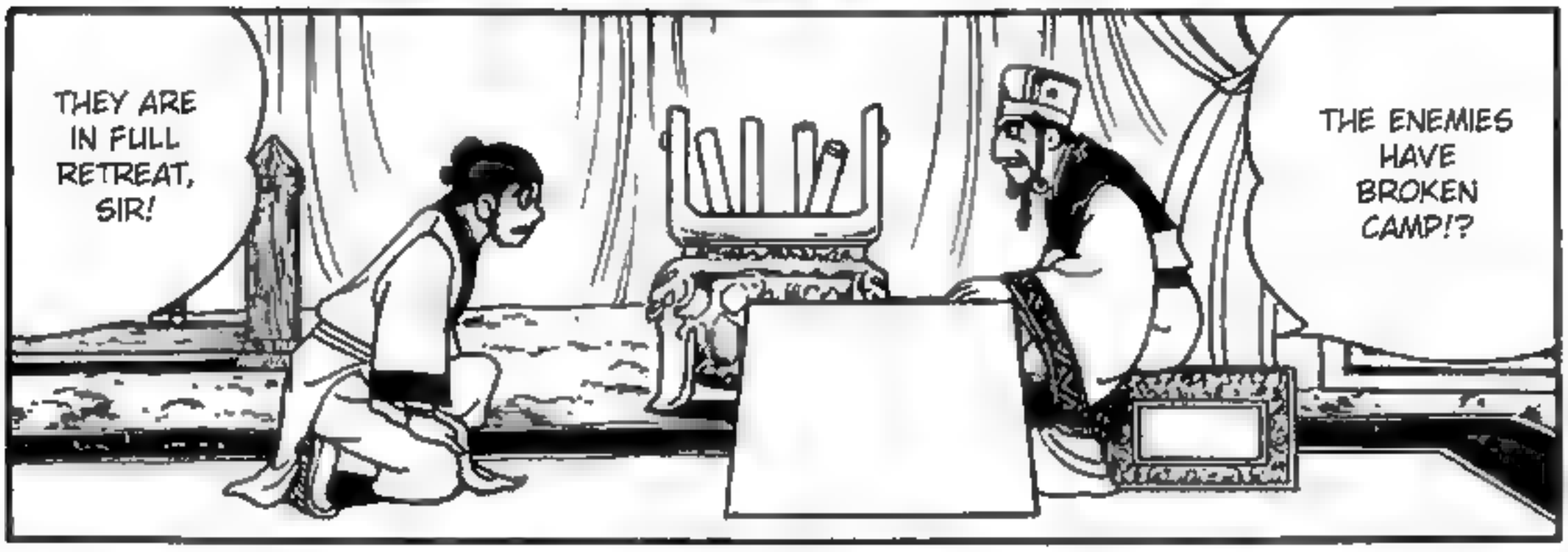

THEY ARE IN FULL RETREAT, SIR!
THE ENEMIES HAVE BROKEN CAMP!?

ORDER AN IMMEDIATE PURSUIT! NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE KONGMING PAY!

GOU AN MUST HAVE DONE IT!

SIMA YI NOW
POUNCED ON THE
OPPORTUNITY TO
ANNHILATE THE
RETREATING
SHU ARMY

COOKING FURNACE

HALT!

THESE MUST BE THE COOKING FURNACES THE SHU TROOPS MADE DURING CAMP.

YES, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO OVERRUN THEM.

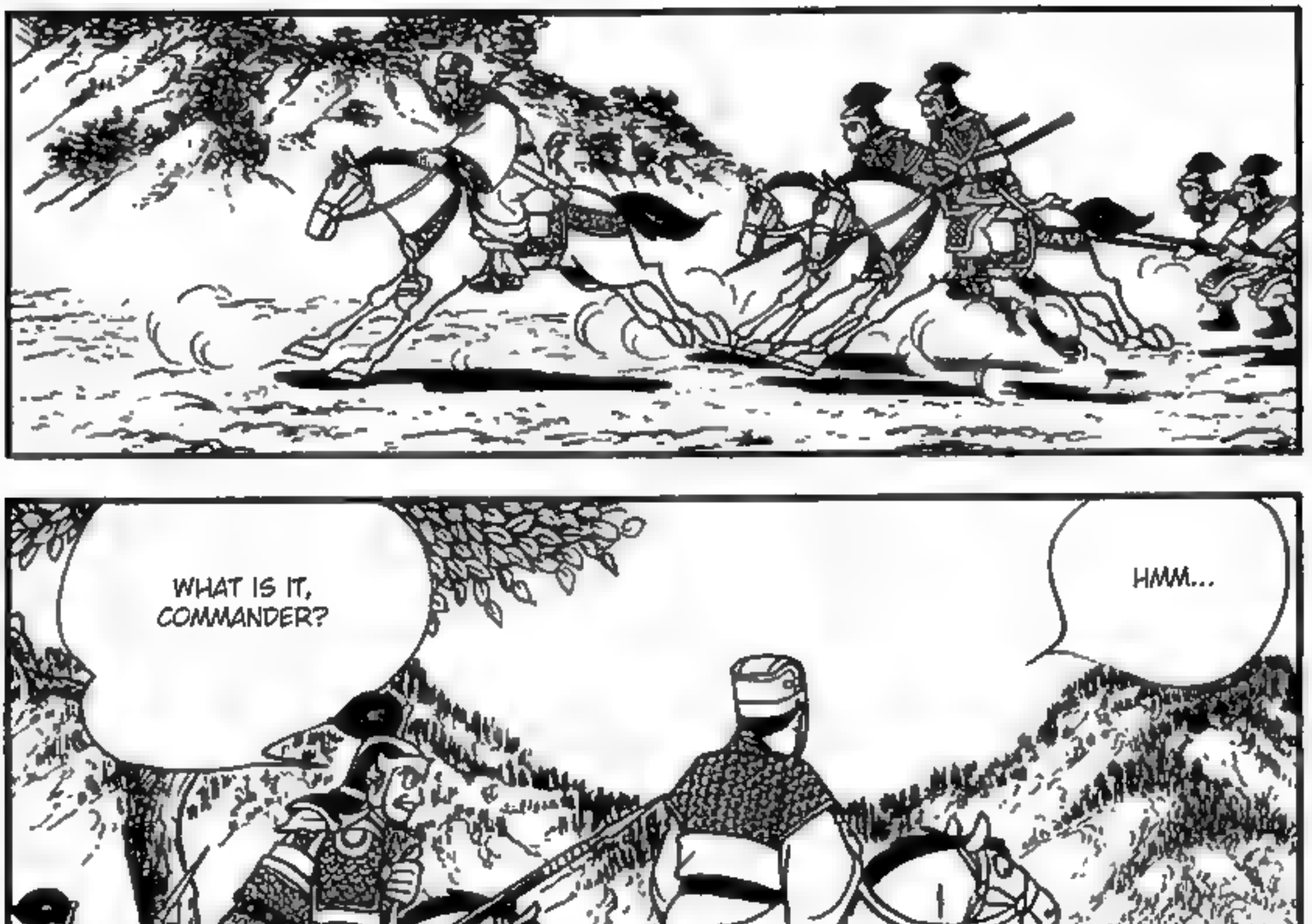
A SUBSTANTIAL FORCE BUT NOT SUBSTANTIAL ENOUGH TO FEND OFF OUR CURRENT PUSUING FORCES.

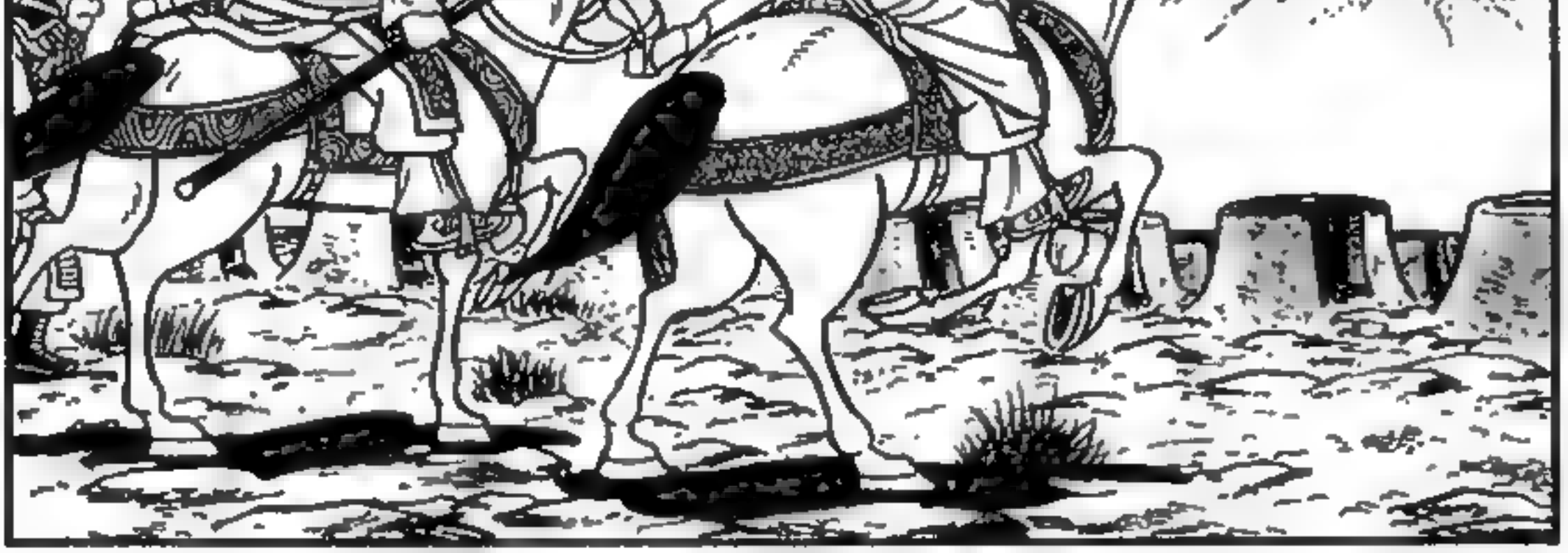
I MUST ADMIT I AM SLIGHTLY CONCERNED THAT A STRATEGIST OF KONGMING'S CALIBRE HAS NOT PREPARED SOMETHING MORE...

RESUME THE PURSUIT, BUT WITH CAUTION!

OH?

SIR! THE REMAINS OF ANOTHER ENEMY CAMP IS JUST UP AHEAD!


WHAT IS IT, COMMANDER?
HMM...


OH, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...
COMPARED TO THE CAMP WE SAW THE OTHER DAY, THERE ARE EVEN MORE COOKING FURNACES.

ONE, TWO, THREE...

COUNT THE FURNACES.

YES, SIR.

1050, 1051, 1052...

2000? THEN WE SHOULD STILL BE EASILY ABLE TO OVERRUN THEM.

THERE ARE 2000 IN TOTAL, SIR.

YES, SIR.

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SCOUTS TO PRECEDE OUR ADVANCE.

HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE THEY WOULD ONLY LEAVE FEW HIDDEN TROOPS? IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THE BULK OF THEIR FORCES ARE FEIGNING RETREAT TO LURE US OUT AGAIN.

EVEN IF THE ENEMIES DO HAVE HIDDEN FORCES, WITH THEIR FEW NUMBERS, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE THEM WITH NO PROBLEM. MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE SHOULD FOCUS ON HASTENING OUR PURSUIT.

MY MAIN CONCERN IS THAT KONGMING SEEMS TO NOT HAVE LEFT BEIND A LARGE ENOUGH FORCE AT HIS REAR TO FEND OFF OUR PURSUIT. THERE MUST BE SOME DEEPER MEANING TO IT... IF WE ARE CARELESS, WE WILL FALL INTO ANOTHER TRAP AS BEFORE.

HOW MANY FURNACES ARE THERE?

WE'VE FOUND REMAINS OF ANOTHER CAMP, SIR!

EVEN MORE FURNACES AGAIN?

ALMOST TWICE AS MANY, SIR!

I'M NOT CERTAIN, BUT IT'S CLEAR THEY'RE ENLARGING THEIR REAR GUARD...

WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS, SIR?

LET US MAKE CAMP HERE FOR THE DAY AS WELL!

JUST WHAT ON EARTH IS KONGMING PLANNING...?

DID THE NUMBER OF FURNACES INCREASE YET AGAIN?

WE'VE FOUND ANOTHER CAMP UP AHEAD!

SIR!

T... TEN THOUSAND?

YES, THEY NUMBER 10,000 NOW!

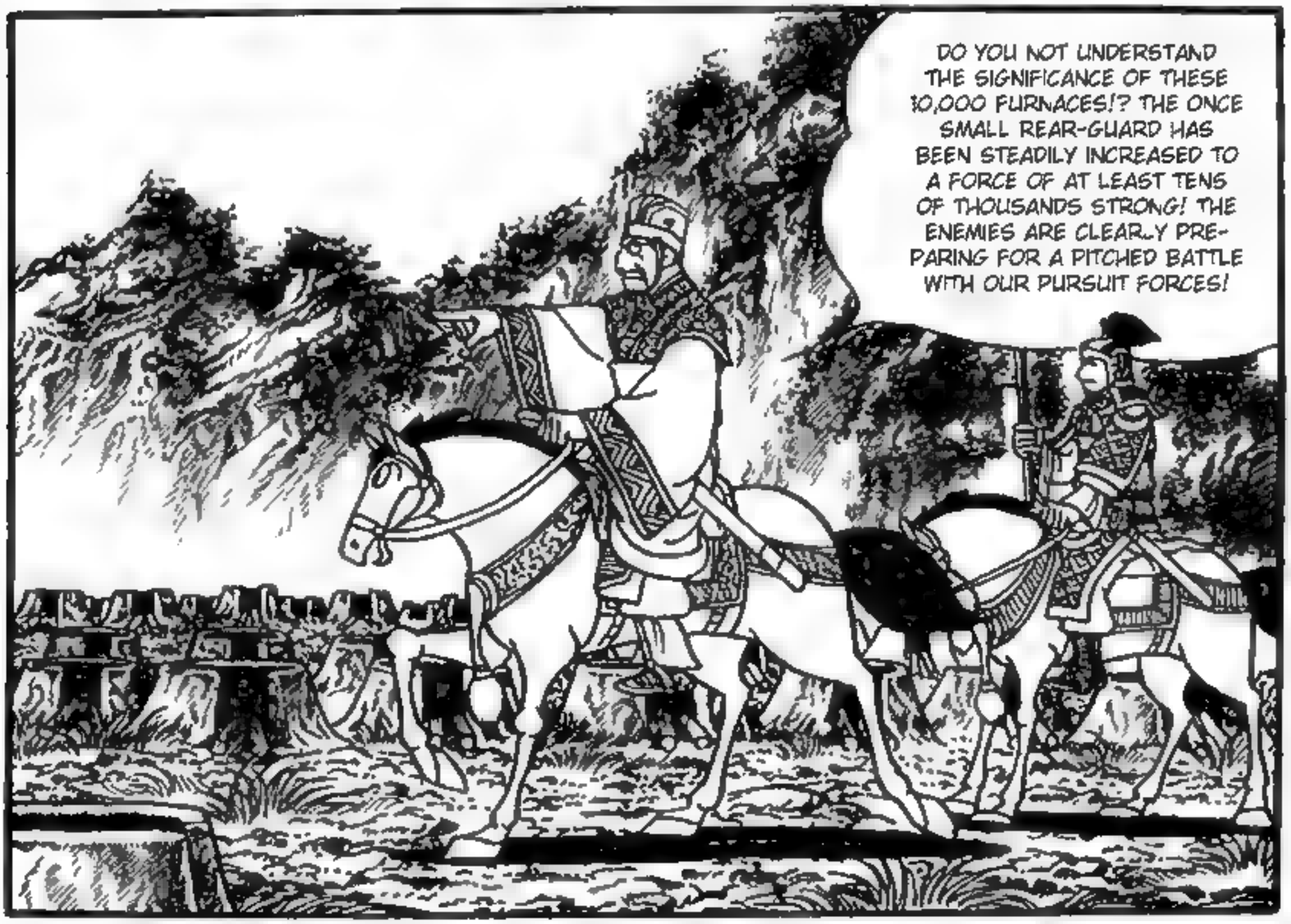
AHHH!

WE'RE ABANDONING OUR PURSUIT!?
WHA!?

I'M CALLING OFF THIS PURSUIT!

HOW CAN WE SIMPLY RETREAT AFTER COMING THIS FAR?

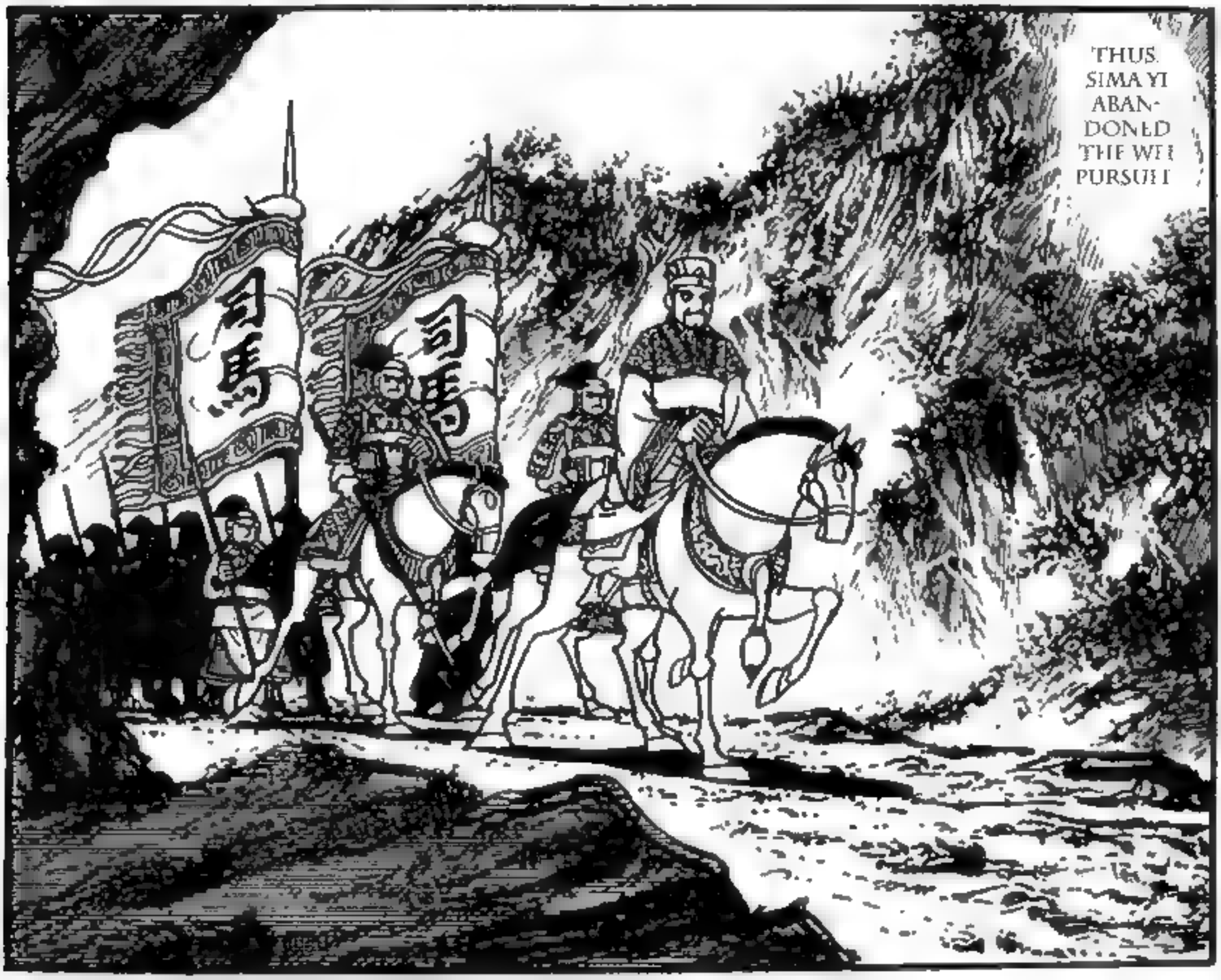
SIR! EVEN A LARGE FORCE IS HIGHLY VULNERABLE ON THE RETREAT!


DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE 10,000 FURNACES!? THE ONCE SMALL REAR-GUARD HAS BEEN STEADILY INCREASED TO A FORCE OF AT LEAST TENS OF THOUSANDS STRONG! THE ENEMIES ARE CLEARLY PREPARING FOR A PITCHED BATTLE WITH OUR PURSUIT FORCES!

MY PLAN TO SOW DISCONTENT IN SHU AND TRIGGER A POSSIBLE POWER STRUGGLE HAS LIKELY BORNE FRUIT. THAT ALONE IS A WORTHY SUCCESS.
IN ANY CASE, IT'S CLEAR THAT KONGMING IS STILL TRYING TO RETREAT SAFELY BACK TO CHENGDU.

WE'VE ALREADY LOST NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF OUR FORCES FROM THE PREVIOUS BATTLES. IF WE LOSE ANY MORE TROOPS, WE WILL BE UTTERLY INCAPABLE OF DEFENDING EVEN CHANG'AN!

THUS, RATHER THAN GAMBLING OUR FEW REMAINING TROOPS ON A RISKY PURSUIT, IT IS WISER TO RETREAT AND STRENGTHEN OUR DEFENSES ONCE MORE.

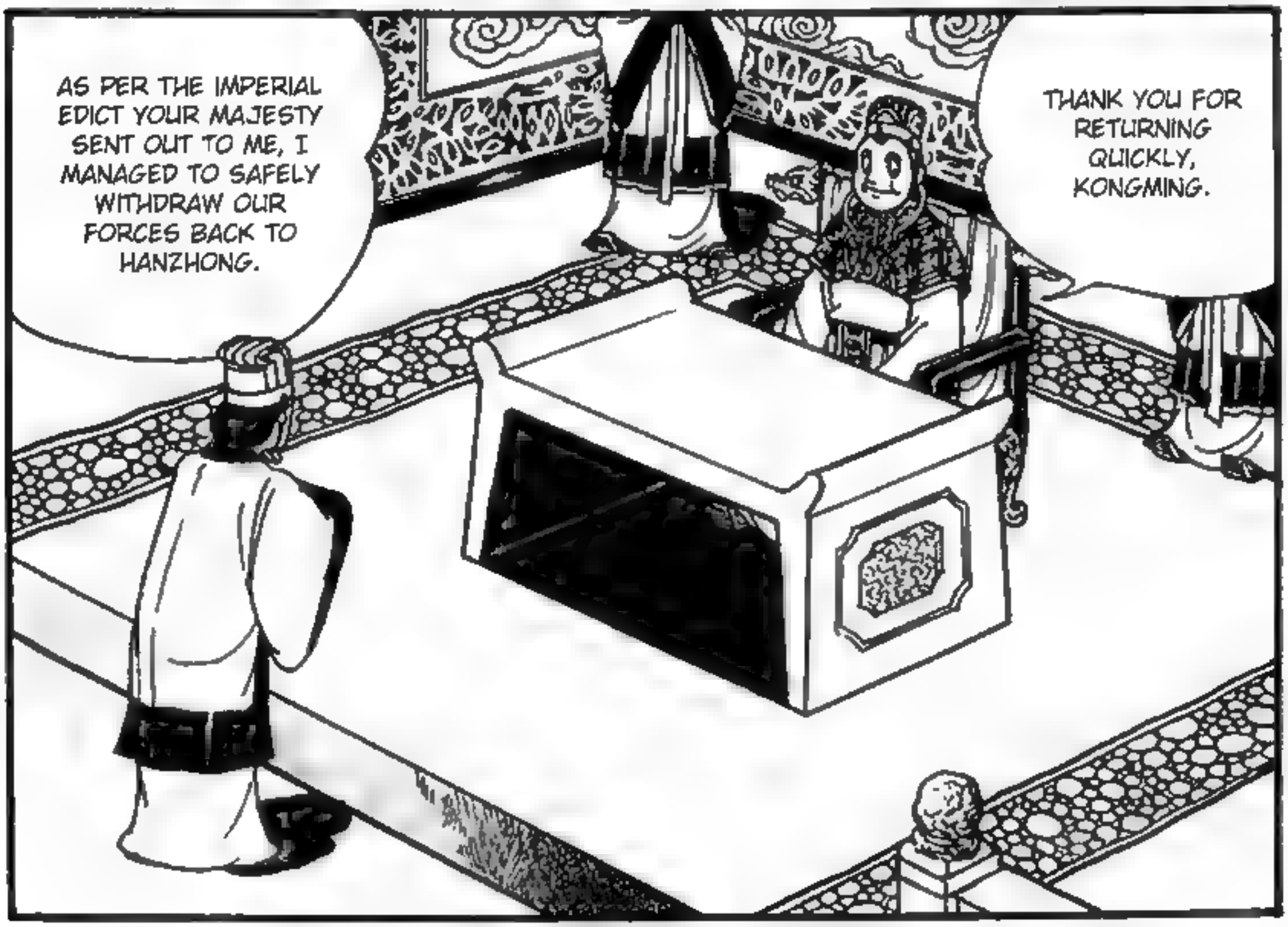

THUS SIMA YI ABAN- DONED THE WEI PURSUIT
司馬
司馬

*STATE OF WEI DURING WARRING STATES PERIOD. NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE WEI EMPIRE IN THIS ERA

KONGMING'S PLAN WORKED PRECISELY BECAUSE HE PREDICTED THAT SIMA YI WOULD KNOW ABOUT SUN BIN'S USE OF FURNACES TO LURE AND DESTROY THE PURSUING WEI* FORCES AT THE BATTLE OF MALING

AS A RESULT, THE SHU FORCES SUCCESSFULLY RETREATED BACK TO HANZHONG WITHOUT LOSING A SINGLE MAN

DISPELLING RUMOURS


AS PER THE IMPERIAL EDICT YOUR MAJESTY SENT OUT TO ME, I MANAGED TO SAFELY WITHDRAW OUR FORCES BACK TO HANZHONG.
THANK YOU FOR RETURNING QUICKLY, KONGMING.

YES, WHAT IS IT?

THERE IS ONE THING I WISH TO ASK YOUR MAJESTY.

OUR ARMIES WERE PREVAILING ON THE BATTLEFIELDS, AND IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL WE COULD FINALLY BRING CHANG'AN TO A SIEGE. WHAT EVENT COULD HAVE BEEN SO URGENT TO ORDER ME TO ABANDON OUR ARMY'S ADVANTAGEOUS SITUATION AND REPORT BACK TO CHENGDU?

I... I SIMPLY HADN'T SEEN YOU IN AGES HERE, SO I LONGED TO SEE YOUR FACE. THERE IS NO OTHER REASON.

AH, THAT... WELL, THAT WAS...

THAT COULD NOT POSSIBLY BE THE REASON. MAY I BE SO BOLD AS TO SUGGEST THAT SOME PERSON OR PEOPLE HAVE WHISPERED RUMOURS ABOUT MY LOYALTIES...?

TO REPAY MY DEBT TO THE FORMER EMPEROR, I HAVE SWORN TO GIVE MY LIFE TO COMPLETING HIS GREAT DREAM. HOWEVER, IF VILE INFLUENCES HOLD SWAY HERE AT COURT, HOW CAN I CARRY OUT OUR RIGHTEOUS REUNIFICATION OF THE REALM?

IT SEEMS MY GUESS WAS CORRECT.

.....

YOU'VE MADE ME REALIZE THE FOLLY OF MY IRREVERSIBLE MISTAKE.

FORGIVE ME, KONGMING... I LENT MY EARS TOO EASILY TO THE HEARSAY OF THE EUNUCHS.

YOUR MAJESTY, THIS MATTER CANNOT BE SIMPLY LAID TO REST AS IT IS. THE ONES RESPONSIBLE MUST BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE, LEST THE COURT REMAIN VULNERABLE TO SINISTER PLOTS.

SO THERE REALLY HAD BEEN VILE RUMOURS CIRCULATING HERE ABOUT ME...

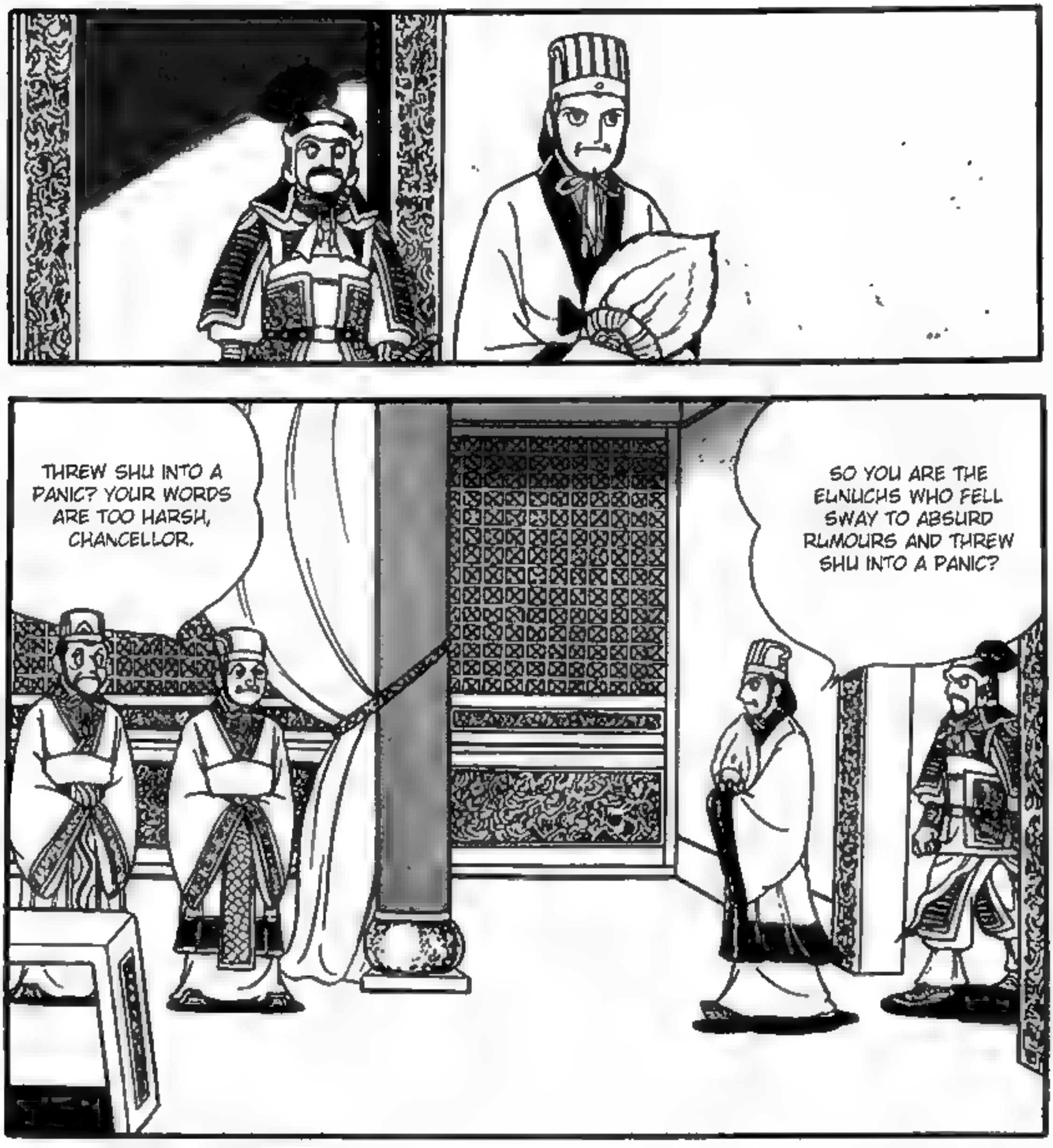
THANK YOU.

YES, I GIVE YOU THE AUTHORITY TO INVESTIGATE THE MATTER.

HIS MAJESTY'S CHEEKS SEEM MORE OBESE, AND HIS EYES A LITTLE MORE INEBRIATED SINCE THE LAST TIME I SAW HIM. HAVE THE MINISTERS AND EUNUCHS BEEN TEACHING OUR EMPEROR NOTHING ELSE BUT TO EAT, DRINK, AND PLAY...?

WELL DONE.

CHANCELLOR! I HAVE BROUGHT THE ONES WHO INITIALLY ALERTED THE EMPEROR ABOUT RUMOURS OF YOUR TREACHERY.


THREW SHU INTO A PANIC? YOUR WORDS ARE TOO HARSH, CHANCELLOR.
SO YOU ARE THE ELNUCHS WHO FELL SWAY TO ABSURD RUMOURS AND THREW SHU INTO A PANIC?
FOR THE EMPIRE...?
ALL WE DID WAS FOR THE PEACE AND SECURITY OF THE EMPIRE.

WHAT INFANTILE AND NAIVE OPINIONS YOU HOLD!

ARE YOU NOT AWARE THAT THE INCESSANT WARS YOU LEAD HAVE FATIGUED THE PEOPLE OF SHU? IF ONLY PEACE WERE TO RETURN, THEIR LIVES WOULD BECOME RICH AND PEACEFUL ONCE MORE AS WELL.

NAIVE!? EXPLAIN!

INFANTILE!?

DO YOU SERIOUSLY THINK THAT IF I WERE TO STOP ATTACKING, WEI WOULD RETURN THE FAVOUR? DO YOU THINK OUR ALLIANCE WITH WU IS STRONG ENOUGH THAT THEY WOULD IGNORE A CHANCE TO POUNCE ON US?

WE LIVE IN AN AGE OF WAR, WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT. IF I DO NOT MARCH OUR ARMIES NORTH, THEN WEI TROOPS WILL INVADE OUR HEARTLANDS AS THEY RECENTLY ATTEMPTED. HOW CAN WE PROTECT OUR PEOPLE IF THEIR LANDS BECOME A BATTLEFIELD?

KNOWING THIS, WOULD YOU MEN STILL NAIVELY CHOOSE A FALSE "PEACE?"

OUR PEOPLE WILL BE ENSLAVED, THEIR FARMLANDS PILLAGED, AND THEIR HOMES BURNED DOWN. HOW CAN SHU STAND STRONG IF EVER MET BY SUCH MISFORTUNES? I ASSURE YOU THAT STAGING THE WAR IN QISHAN, OUTSIDE OUR HEARTLANDS, IS MORE THAN A HUNDRED TIMES BETTER THAN THAT.

I SUSPECT THIS WAS AN ENEMY PLOT.

NOW IT SEEMS THESE RUMOURS ABOUT ME CIRCULATED JUST WHEN OUR FORCES WERE ON THE BRINK OF ACHIEVING A BREAKTHROUGH.

FROM WHOM DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT THESE RUMOURS?

AN ENEMY PLOT!?

AND YOU SIMPLY BELIEVED THEM WITHOUT EVEN INVESTIGATING THE SOURCE?

I HEARD IT FROM MY SERVANTS.

I HEARD IT DIRECTLY FROM A MAN NAMED GOU AN.

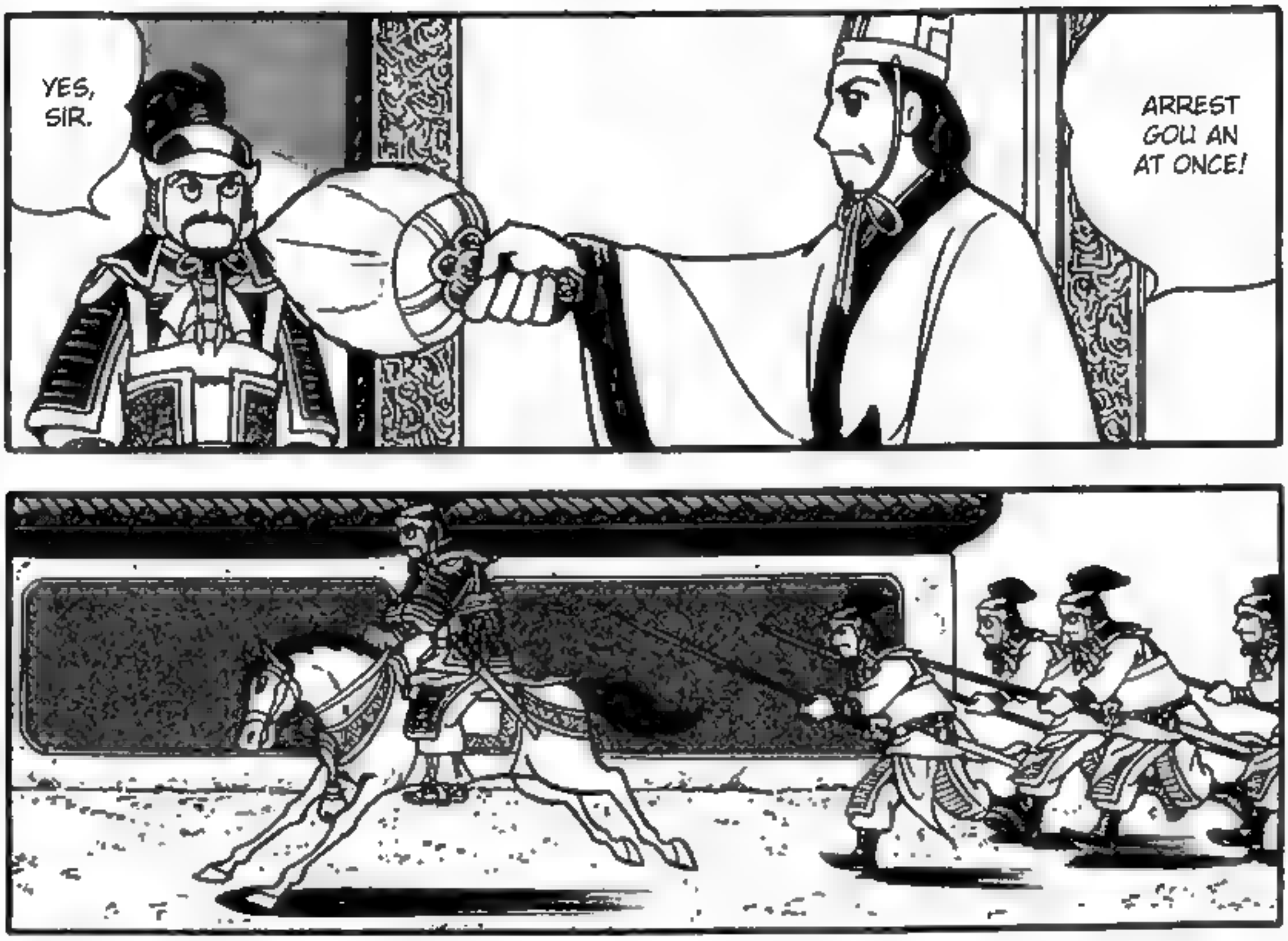
I HEARD IT IN THE CITY STREETS...

WHO IS HE?

I SEE... I HAD MY SUSPICIONS THAT HE WAS BEHIND IT...

GOU AN!?

HE WAS A MAN I CONSIDERED EXECUTING FOR BEING LAZY IN HIS DUTIES, BEFORE I REDUCED HIS SENTENCE TO 80 STRIKES WITH A WOODEN STICK.


YES, SIR.
ARREST GOU AN AT ONCE!

YES, SIR...
AS FOR THE REST OF YOU, YOU WILL EVENTUALLY ANSWER FOR YOUR CRIMES OF FOOLISHLY THROWING THE EMPEROR AND THE PEOPLE INTO A PANIC. YOU ARE HEREBY DISMISSED AND WILL AWAIT MY FURTHER ORDERS!

THE GUARDS ENTERED GOU AN'S HOME. ONLY TO FIND IT EMPTY.

GOU AN HAD ALREADY FLED FOR WEI.

AN ENEMY PLOT!?
YOUR MAJESTY, MY INVESTIGION UNCOVERED THAT THE RUMOURS WERE AN ENEMY PLOT.

I WAGE WAR NOT BECAUSE I LOVE WAR.
WITH THIS MATTER SETTLED, I WILL NOW DEPART FOR QISHAN ONCE MORE, BUT LET ME SAY ONE THING TO YOU ALL BEFORE I LEAVE.
WEI HAS ITS EYE SET ON THE UNIFICATION OF THE REALM AND WILL NEVER GIVE UP ITS DESIRE TO CONQUER SHU. DO NOT FORGET THAT BEING THE LEGITIMATE SUCCESOR TO HAN COMES WITH A HEAVY DUTY. THE FORMER EMPEROR FOUGHT WITH WEI BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IT WAS JUST TO CARRY OUT THIS DUTY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CEASELESS EFFORTS.

YOUR MAJESTY, I MUST NOW LEAVE FOR QISHAN.

AS WEI POSSESSES THREE TIMES THE RESOURCES WE DO, THIS DUTY IS NOT EASY TO CARRY OUT. BUT WE MUST ALL GRIT OUR TEETH AND STRUGGLE WITH EVERY LAST OUNCE OF OUR STRENGTH TO RESTORE THE GLORY OF THE HAN!

OF COURSE.

JIANG WAN. FEI YI. MAY WE HAVE A TALK?

WE DEEPLY APOLOGIZE FOR THIS INCIDENT.

IT IS VERY TROUBLING FOR ME IF YOU TWO DO NOT DO YOUR BEST TO PREVENT OUR EMPEROR FROM FALLING FOR FUTURE ENEMY PLOTS.

FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN AND HEARD, IT SEEMS HIS MAJESTY IS SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME WITH WINE AND WOMEN.

THERE IS ONE OTHER MATTER OF CONCERN... IT IS THE EMPEROR.

FORGIVE OUR NEGLIGENCE.

PLEASE GUIDE OUR EMPEROR WELL SO THAT HE WILL BE LOVED AND RESPECTED BY HIS PEOPLE FOR THE DAY WHEN THE REALM IS REUNITED.

THUS, KONGMING DEPARTED TO HANZHONG WITH HIS DETERMINATION STRENGTHENED.

HANZHONG
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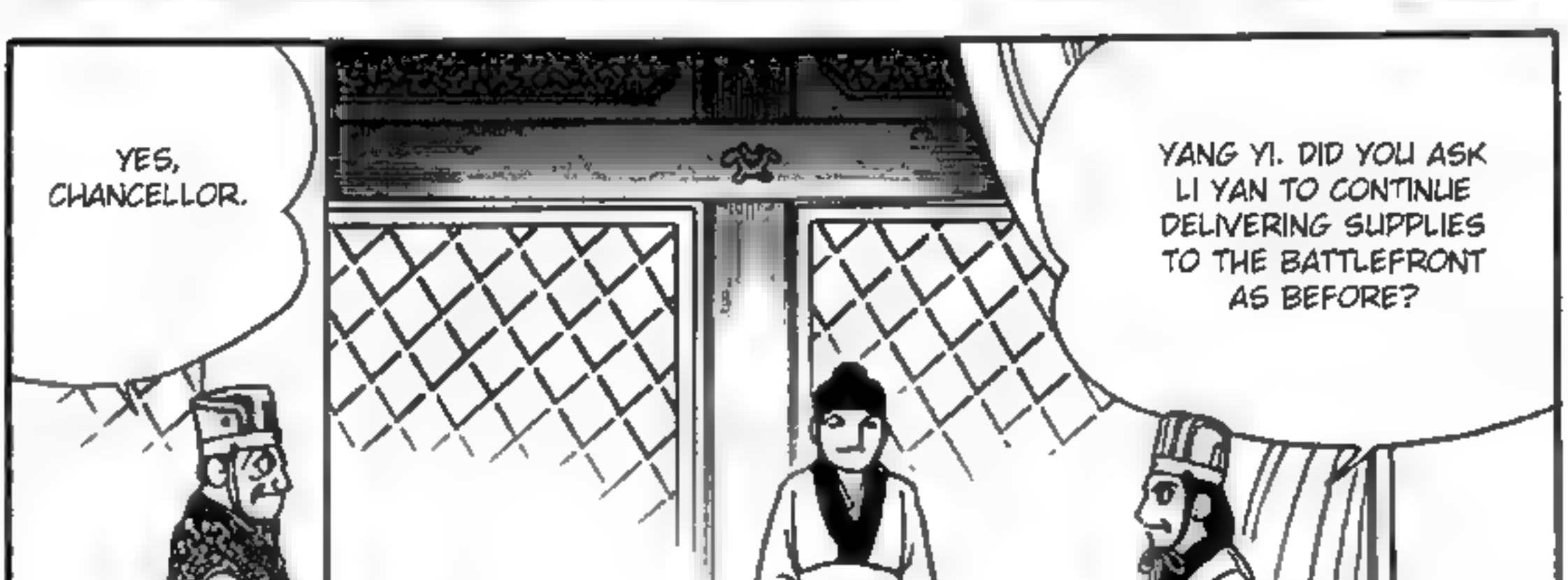

YES, CHANCELLOR.
YANG YI. DID YOU ASK LI YAN TO CONTINUE DELIVERING SUPPLIES TO THE BATTLEFRONT AS BEFORE?

HM...

THE FREQUENT CAMPAIGNS HAVE LEFT OUR TROOPS TIRED AND OUR GRANARY STORES LACKING. COMPLAINTS ARE STARTING TO BE HEARD FROM THE RANKS AS WELL.

MAY I SUGGEST ONE THING, SIR?

YES?

AFTER 3 MONTHS OF REST, THE 100,000 TROOPS HERE WILL THEN MARCH TO QISHAN TO ROTATE WITH THOSE ON THE BATTLEFRONT. THIS WAY, WE CAN REDUCE WAR WEARINESS AND THE BURDEN ON OUR SUPPLIES.

THUS, I SUGGEST WE ROUTINELY ROTATE HALF OF OUR FORCES FROM ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING TO RESTING. FOR INSTANCE, INSTEAD OF MOBILIZING 200,000 TROOPS TO QISHAN, WE CAN SEND 100,000 WHILE 100,000 REST HERE.

AH, AN EXCELLENT SUGGESTION.

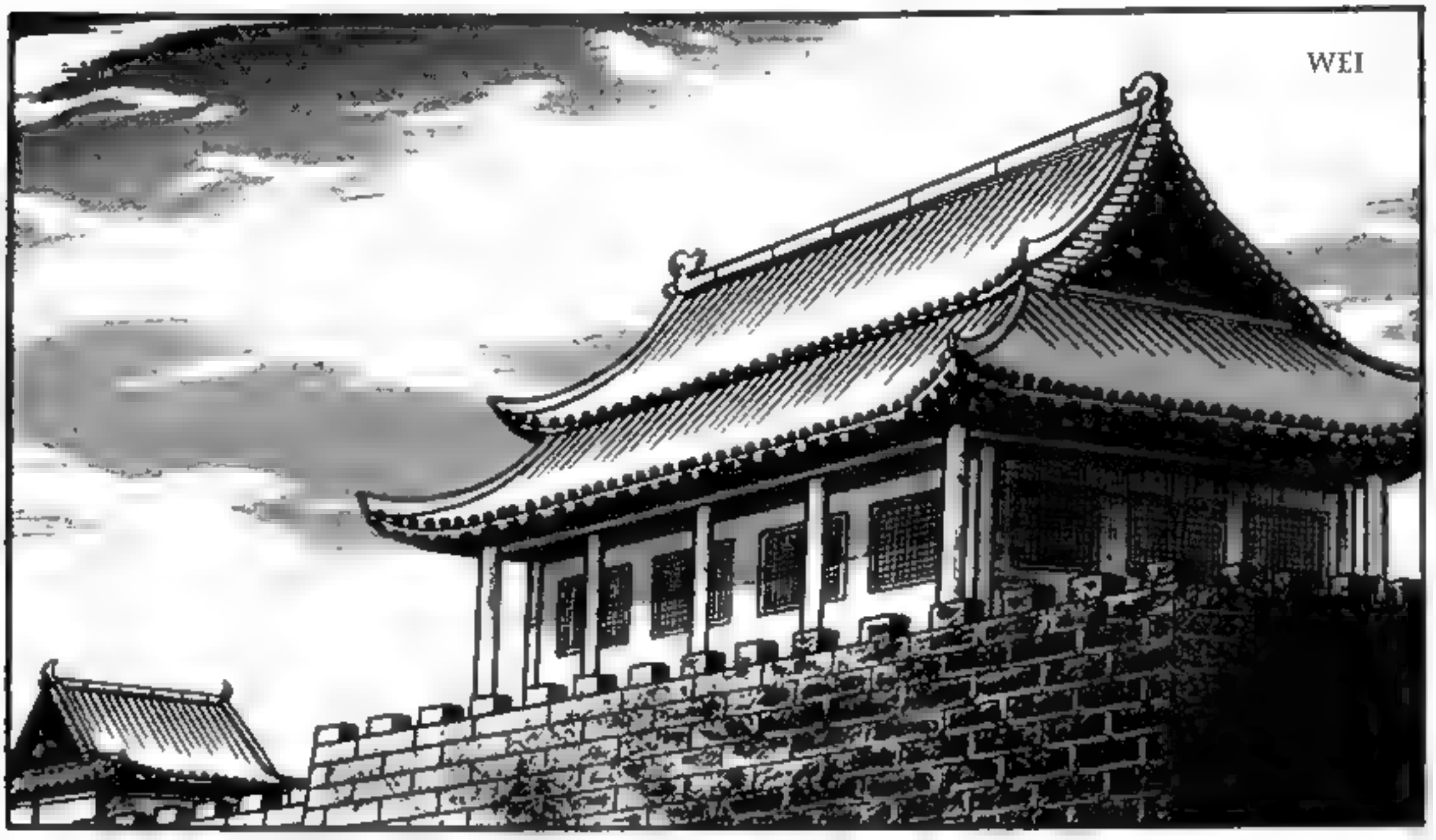
THANK YOU.

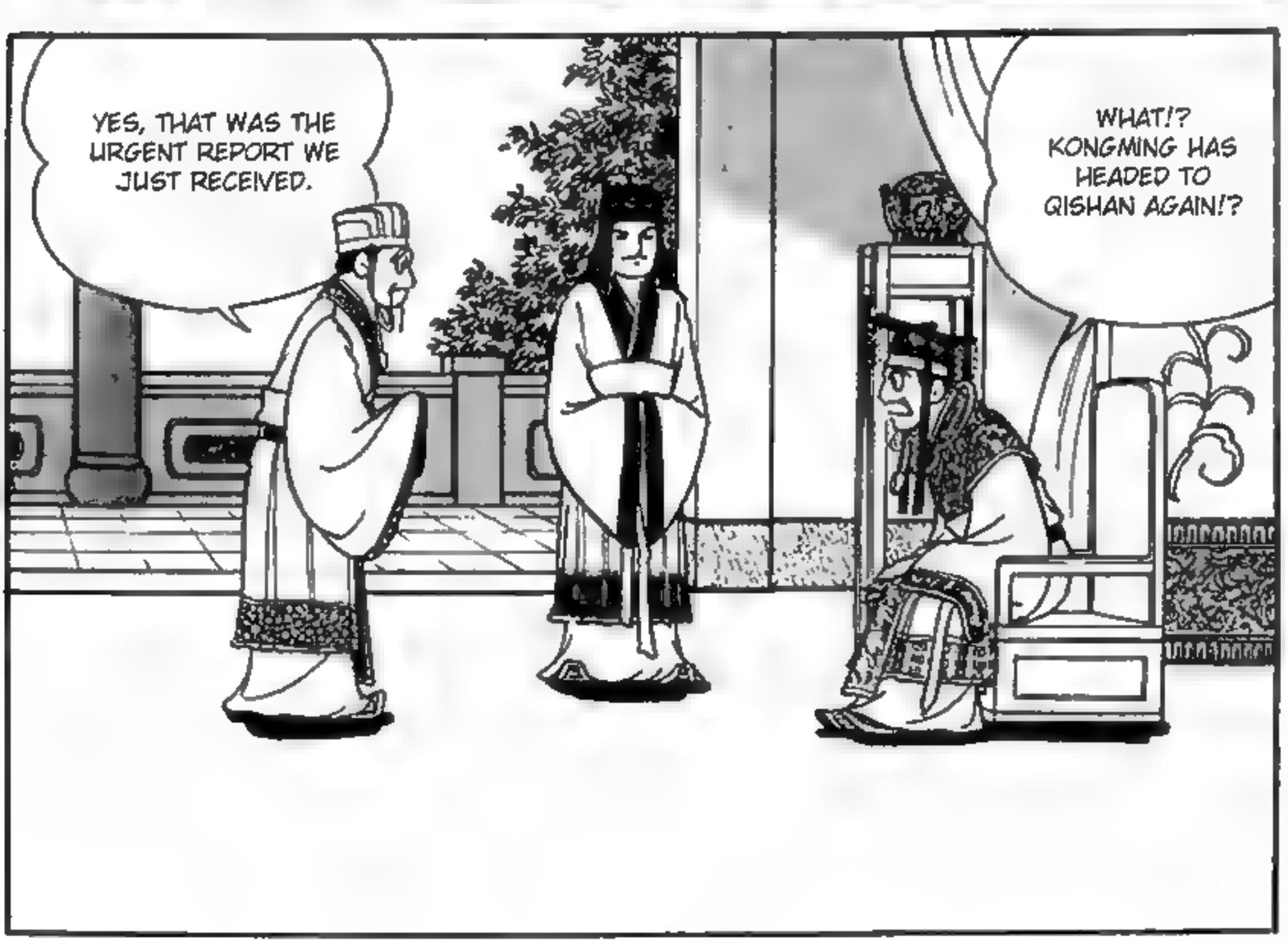
I ACCEPT YOUR PROPOSAL. THE ROTATIONS WILL BE CONDUCTED EVERY 100 DAYS.

THE CONQUEST OF WEI IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED IN A DAY. WE MUST PLAN HOW TO BEST USE OUR TROOPS AND RESOURCES IN THE LONG TERM.

WITH THIS NEW ARMY REFORM KONGMING TOOK HALF OF HANZHONG'S FORCES TO QISHAN. IT WAS THE 2ND MONTH IN THE 9TH YEAR OF BEGINNING PROSPERITY (231 AD)

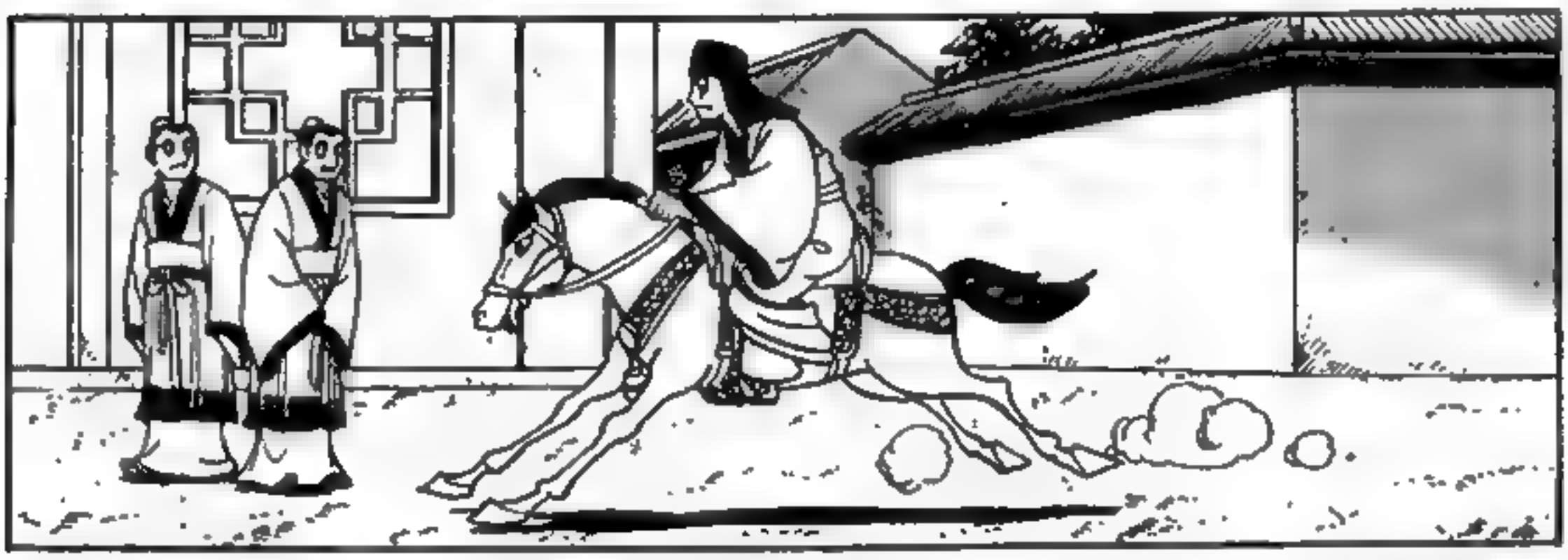
BIG DIPPER BANNER





YES!

CALL SIMA YI AT ONCE!



OF COURSE.

PLEASE EXCUSE ME THEN.

YES, HIS MAJESTY REQUIRES YOUR IMMEDIATE PRESENCE AT COURT.

KONGMING IS HEADING FOR QISHAN AGAIN?

SIMA YI RUSHED TO THE PALACE

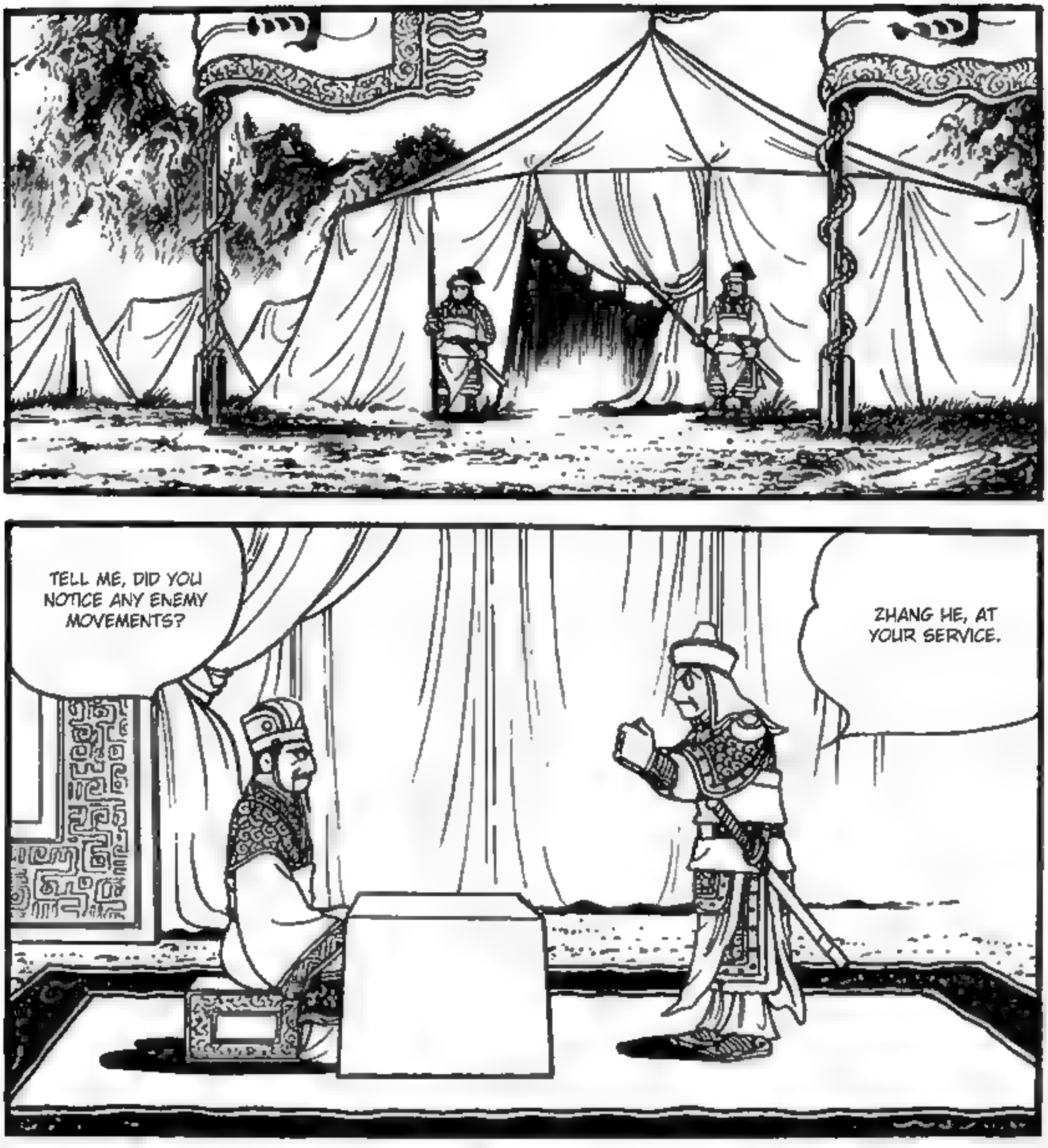
YOU OVERESTI-MATE THIS HUMBLE SERVANT.

WITH CAO ZHEN'S TRAGIC PASSING, YOU ARE THE ONLY MAN SUITABLE. PLEASE TAKE THE COMMAND ONCE MORE.

NEVERTHELESS, I WILL GIVE MY UTMOST EFFORTS TO REPEL KONGMING AND LIVE UP TO YOUR MAJESTY'S EXPECTATIONS.

征西大都督
WITH ZHANG HE LEADING THE VANGUARD, SIMA YI ONCE AGAIN HURRIED TO CHANG AN TO ORGANIZE ITS DEFENSE

THE WEI ARMY FORTIFIED A DEFENSIBLE POSITION ALONG THE WEI RIVER


TELL ME, DID YOU NOTICE ANY ENEMY MOVEMENTS?
ZHANG HE, AT YOUR SERVICE.

HMM, ARE THEY PLANNING FOR A DRAWN-OUT CAMPAIGN THIS TIME?
OTHER THAN SETTING UP CAMP, THE ENEMIES HAVE TAKEN NO SPECIAL ACTION THUS FAR.

WHICH MEANS KONGMING'S FIRST PRIORITY RIGHT NOW IS SECURING FOOD...

YES.

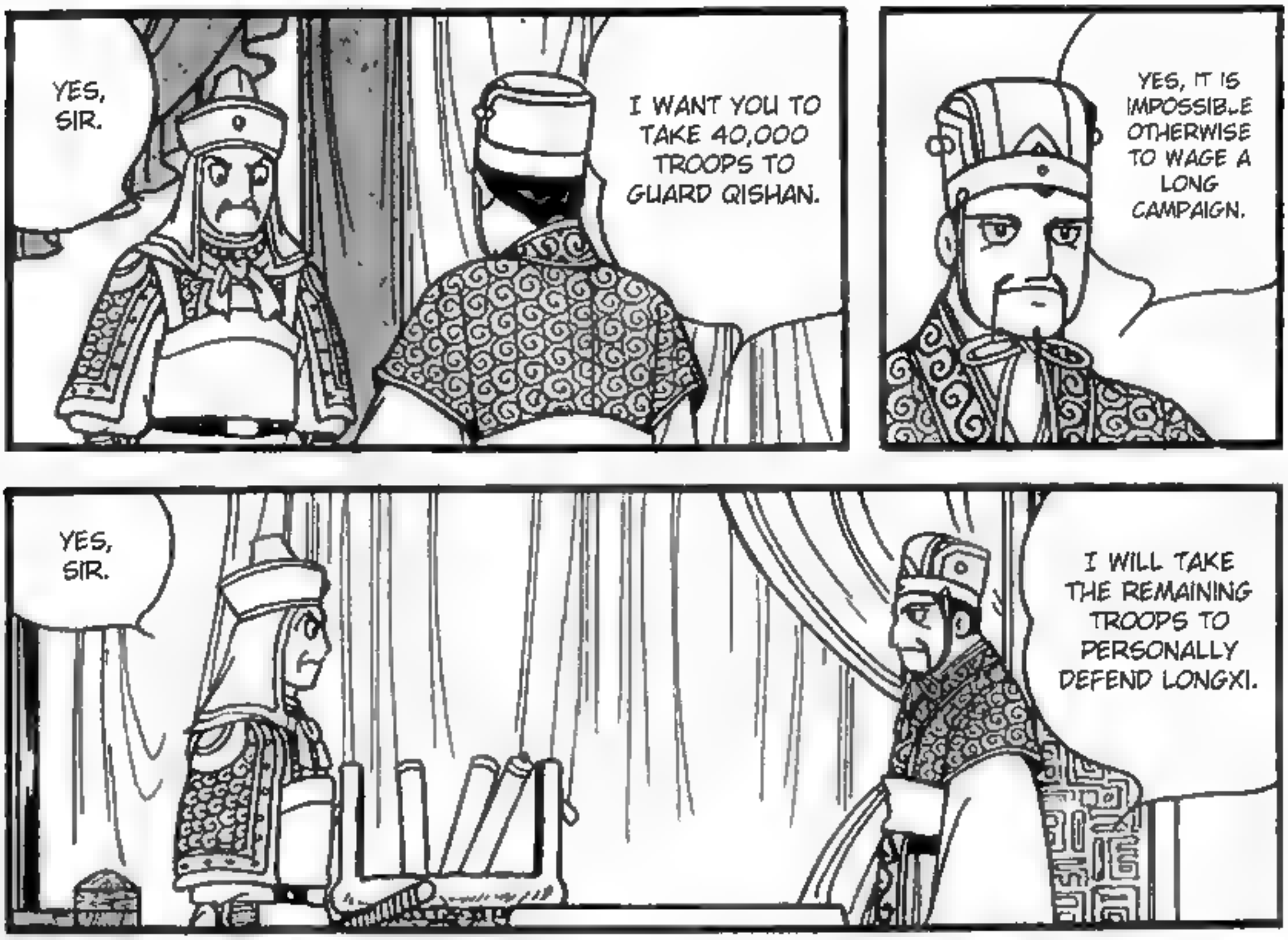
BUT IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN THEY WILL CERTAINLY FACE PROBLEMS WITH SUPPLIES AGAIN.

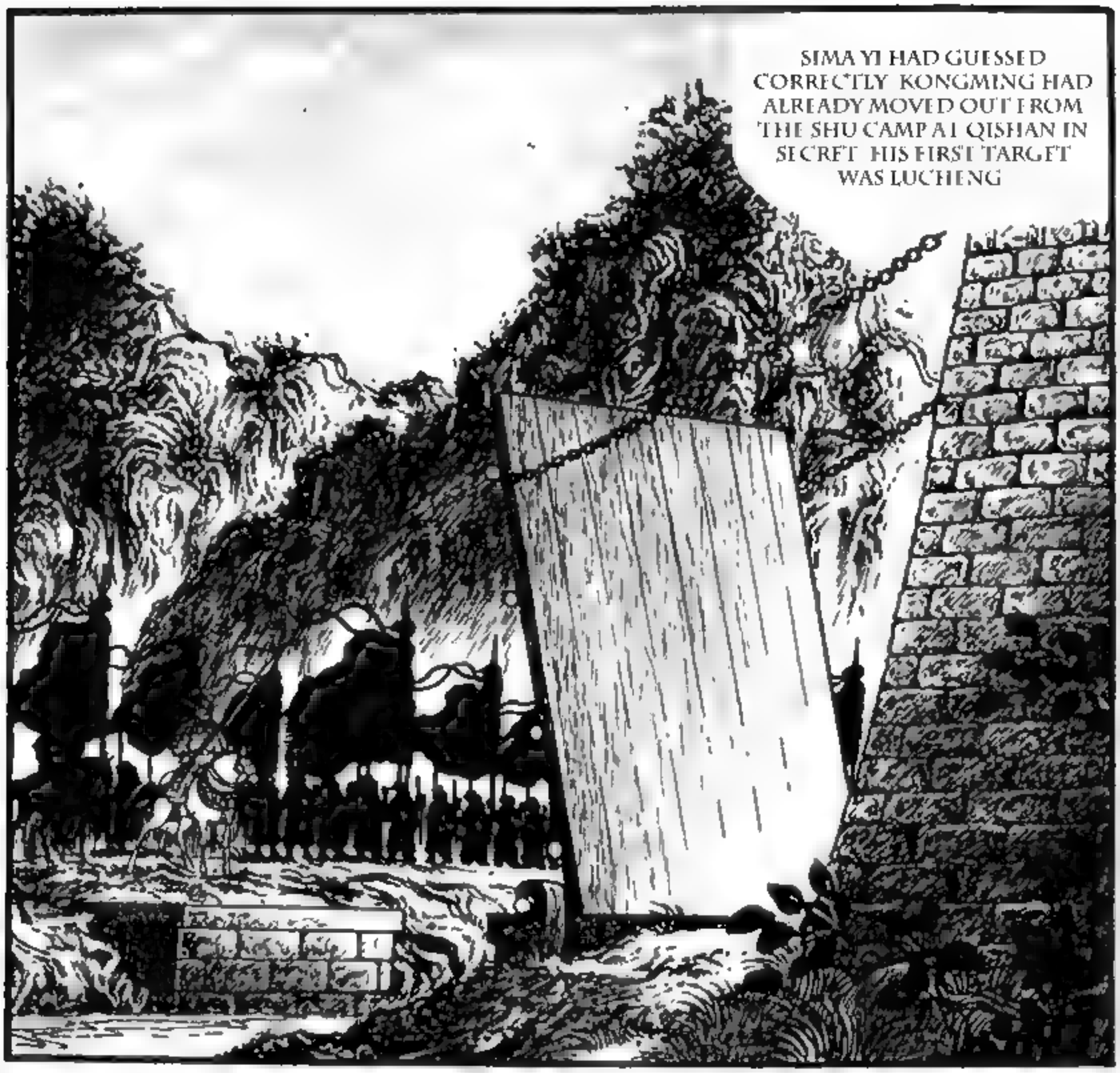
YES, THE VAST WHEAT FIELDS OF LONGXI WOULD BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THE SHU ARMY FOR QUITE SOME TIME.

I BELIEVE IT IS HARVEST SEASON FOR LONGXI'S WHEAT FIELDS RIGHT NOW. THOSE WHEAT WOULD SURELY BE TEMPTING FOR ANY ARMY.

SO HE'LL BE AIMING FOR LONGXI?

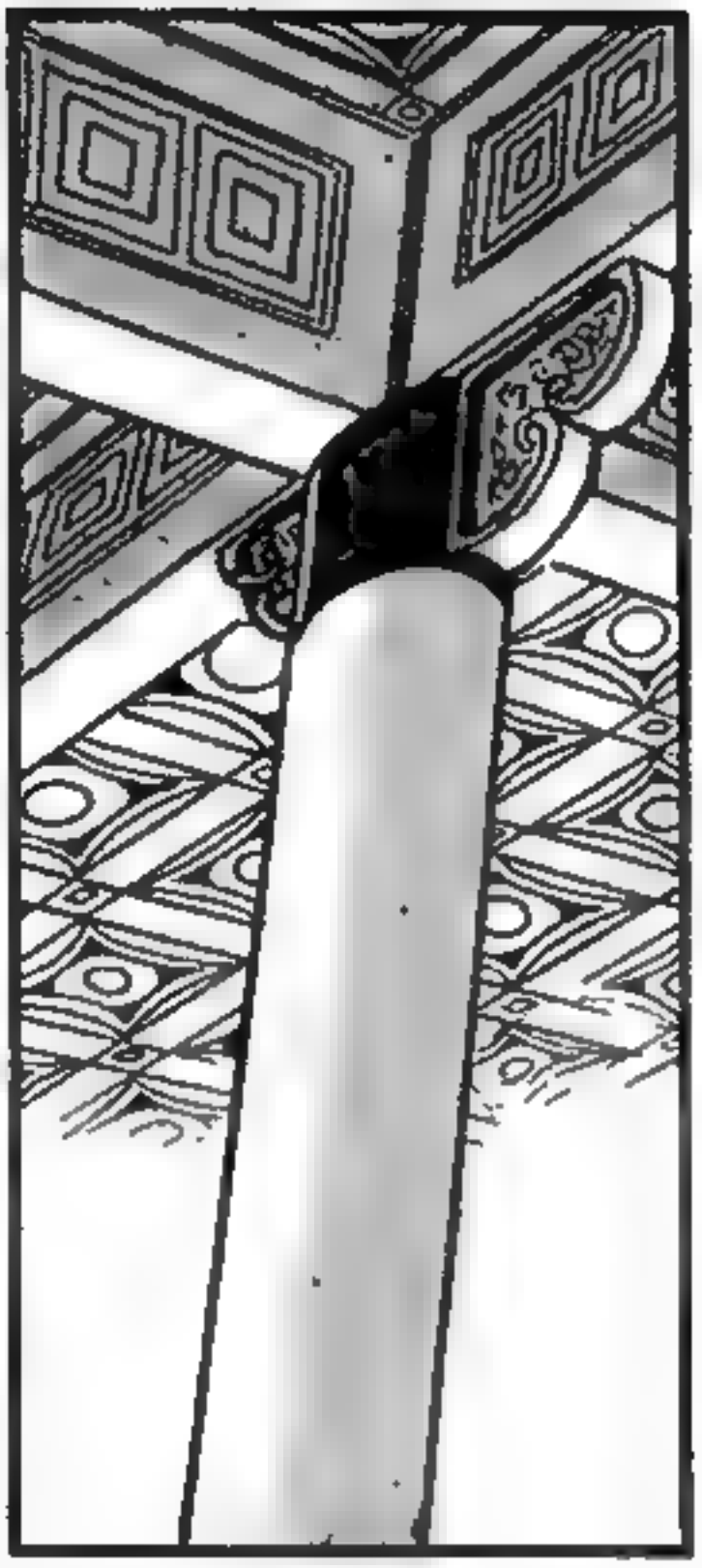
THEN THERE'S NOT A CHANCE THAT KONGMING WOULD IGNORE THEM!


YES, SIR.
I WANT YOU TO TAKE 40,000 TROOPS TO GUARD QISHAN.
YES, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE OTHERWISE TO WAGE A LONG CAMPAIGN.
YES, SIR.
I WILL TAKE THE REMAINING TROOPS TO PERSONALLY DEFEND LONGXI.
THUS, THE BULK OF THE WEI TROOPS HEADED TO DENY WHEAT TO THE ENEMIES


SIMA YI HAD GUESSED CORRECTLY KONGMING HAD ALREADY MOVED OUT FROM THE SHU CAMP AT QISHAN IN SECRET HIS FIRST TARGET WAS LUCHENG

AS LUCHENG WAS ONLY A SMALL CITY WITH FEW TROOPS, ITS GOVERNOR LOST THE WILL TO RESIST UPON HEARING KONGMING S NAME.

THAT WOULD BE IN LONGXI.
TELL ME, WHERE ARE THE WHEAT FIELDS RICHEST AROUND THESE PARTS?



YES?
ZHANG YI, MA ZHONG.

I SEE.

YES, SIR.
REMAIN HERE WHILE I HEAD TO LONGXI.

AFTER LEAVING ENOUGH TROOPS TO DEFEND LUCHENG, KONGMING HEADED FOR LONGXI

YES, WHAT IS IT?

CHANCELLOR!

SIMA YI IS HERE!?

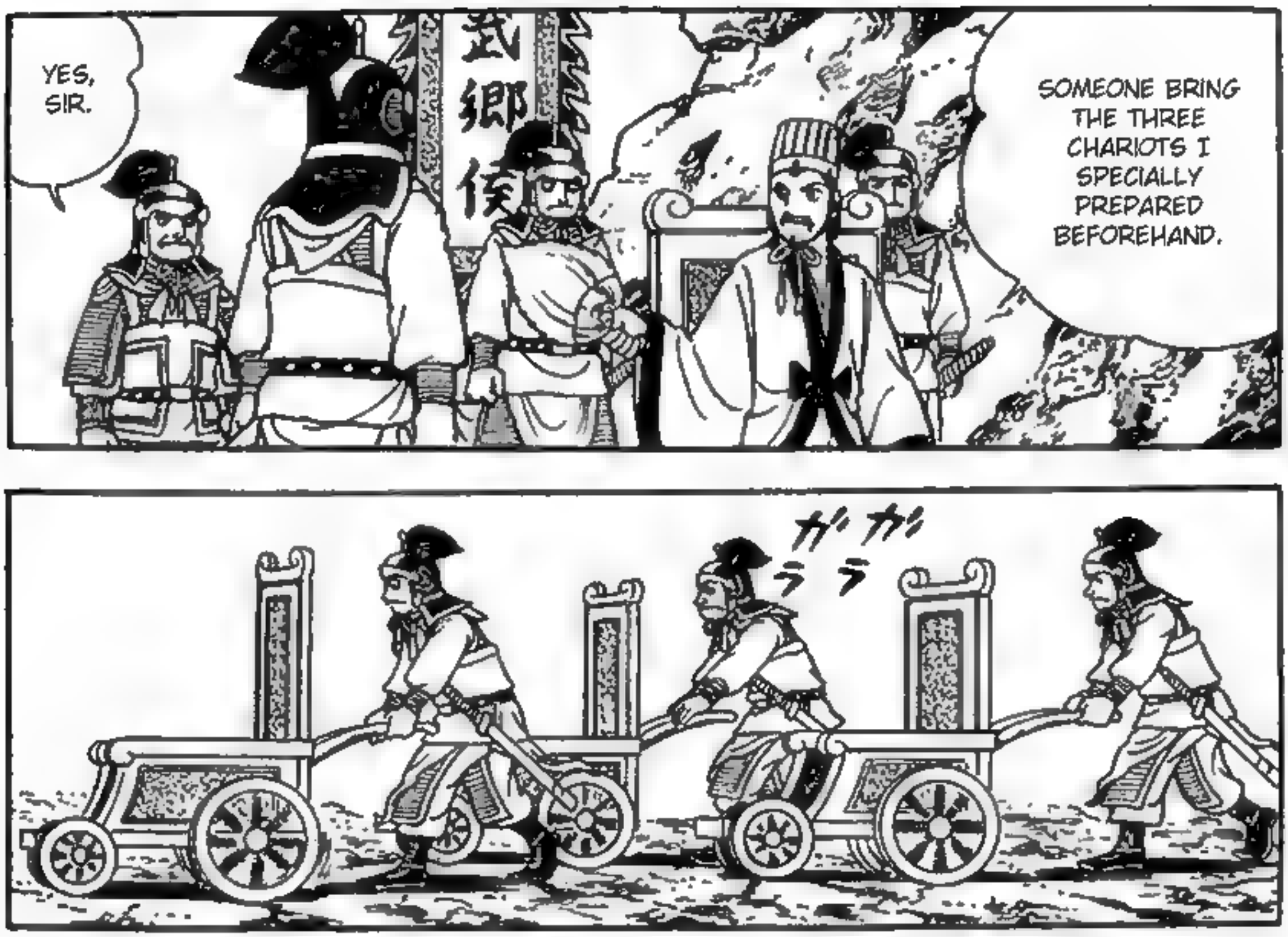
OUR ADVANCE TO LONGXI HAS BEEN BLOCKED BY THE WEI ARMY. IT SEEMS SIMA YI IS PERSONALLY HERE TO DEFEND LONGXI.

MNN... ALTHOUGH I TOOK GREAT CARE TO MOVE OUT FROM QISHAN IN SECRET, SIMA YI MUST HAVE EXPECTED ALL ALONG THAT I SOUGHT GRAIN...

YES, SIR!

BRING JIANG WEI, MA DAI, AND WEI YAN BEFORE ME.

IF HE'S ALREADY HERE, HE MUST HAVE MADE SOLID PREPARATIONS TO DEFEND LONGXI...


YES, SIR.
武鄉侯
SOMEONE BRING THE THREE CHARIOTS I SPECIALLY PREPARED BEFOREHAND.
ガガ ララ
INDEED.
DID YOU CALL FOR US, CHANCELLOR?

IT SEEMS SIMA YI HAS ANTICIPATED OUR ADVANCE INTO LONGXI AND IS ALREADY HERE WITH A LARGE ARMY.

武鄉侯

THE CHARIOTS WILL BE PUSHED BY 24 MEN. THEY MUST BE DRESSED IN BLACK, WITH UNKEMPT HAIR AND DRAWN SWORDS, AS THEY STAND TO THE LEFT AND RIGHT SIDES OF THE CHARIOT. AHEAD OF THE CHARIOT WILL BE A MAN CARRYING A BANNER OF THE BIG DIPPER'S SEVEN STARS.

YOU WILL LEAD THREE CHARIOT GROUPS TO THE REAR, LEFT, AND RIGHT OF SHANGGUI. EACH OF THESE CHARIOTS WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY 1000 ARMED ESCORTS AND 500 ADDITIONAL SOLDIERS WITH WAR DRUMS.

WHISPER WHISPER

AND THEN...

YES, SIR.

NOW GO.

THE REST OF YOU WILL PREPARE ROPES AND SICKLES TO REAP LONGXI'S WHEAT FIELDS.

NOW IF THE WEATHER CAN BE KIND TO ME...

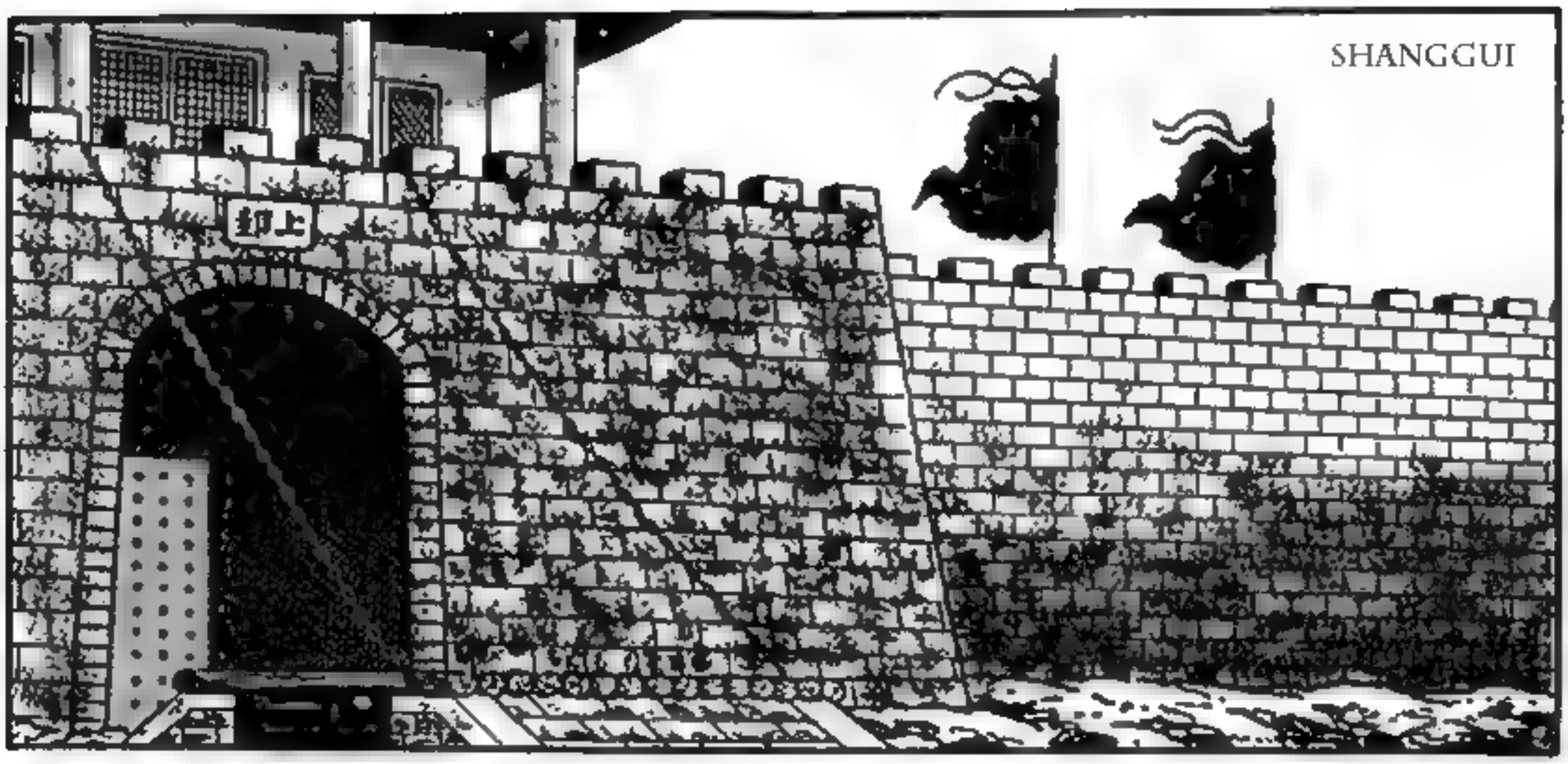
HM?

WHA?

LOOKS LIKE ENEMIES.

WHATEVER IT IS, WE'VE GOTTA REPORT IT AT ONCE!

W-WHO OR WHAT IS THAT!?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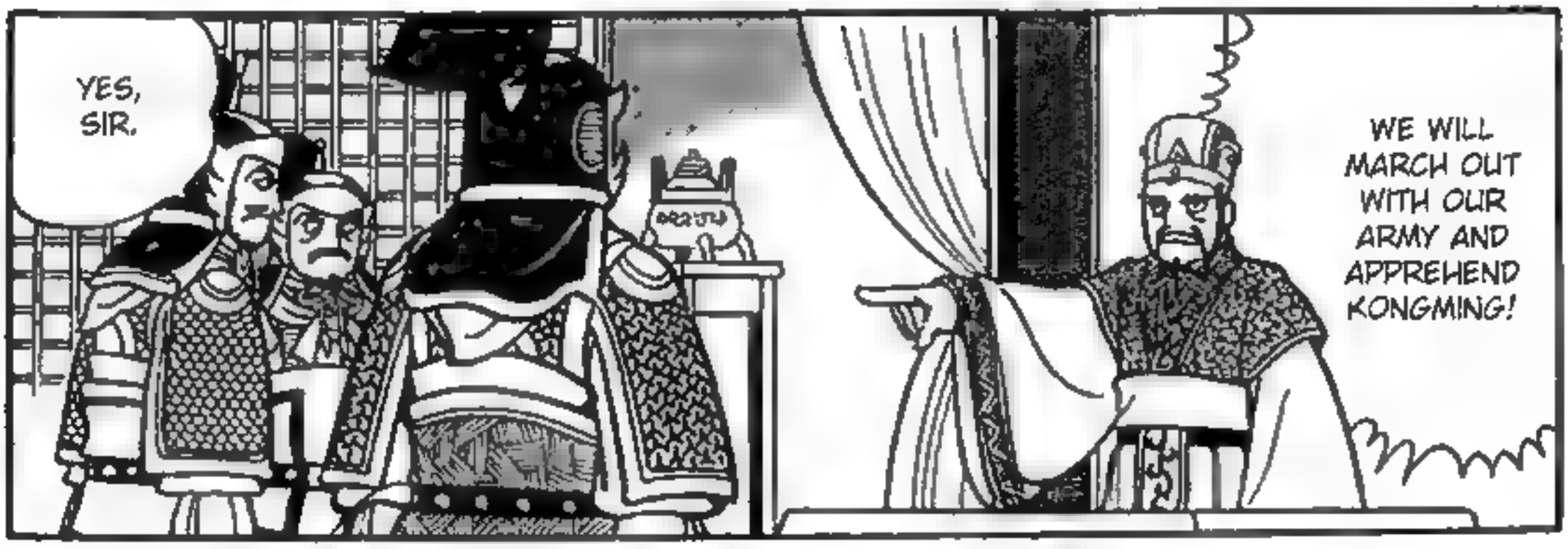
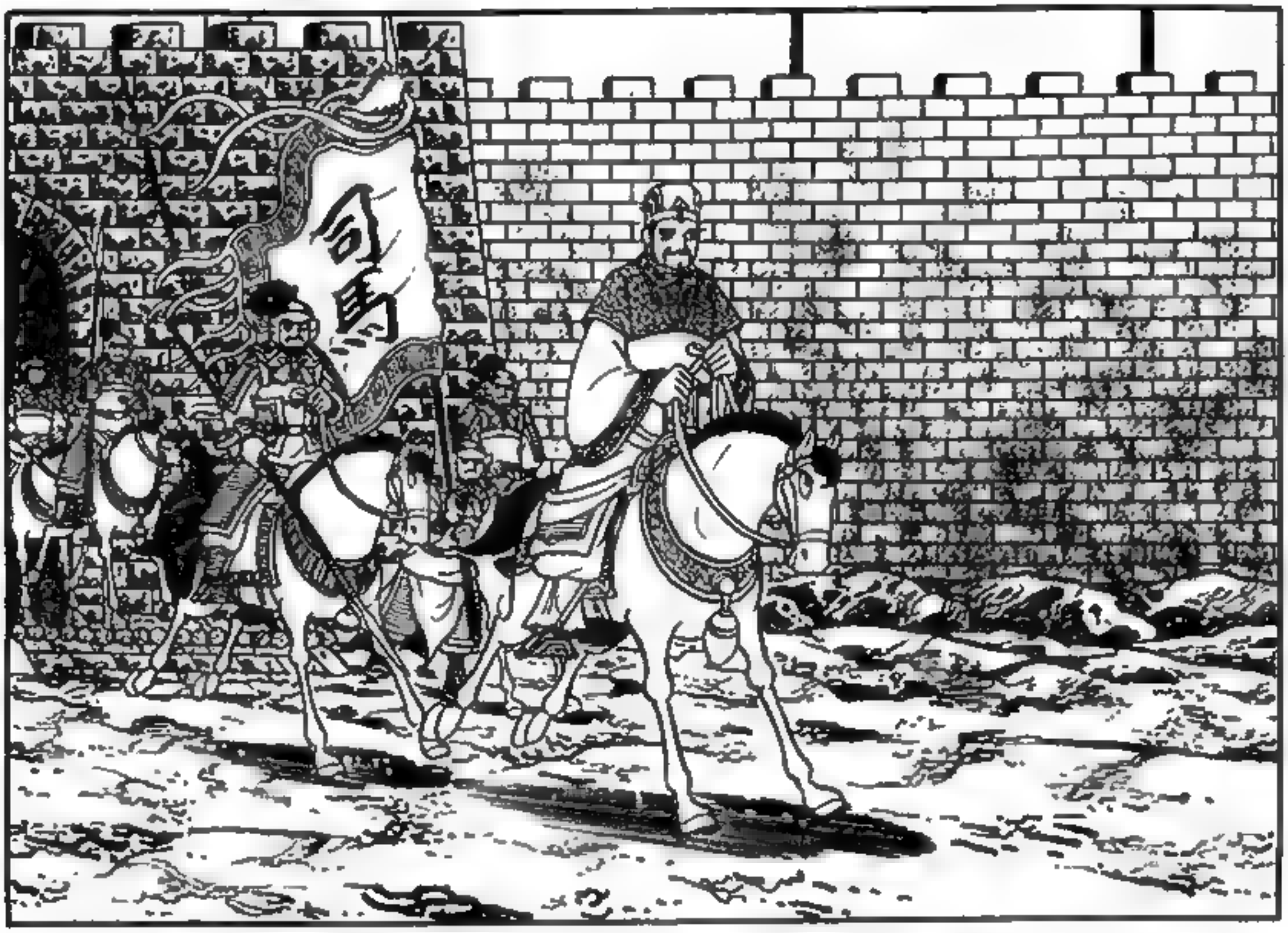
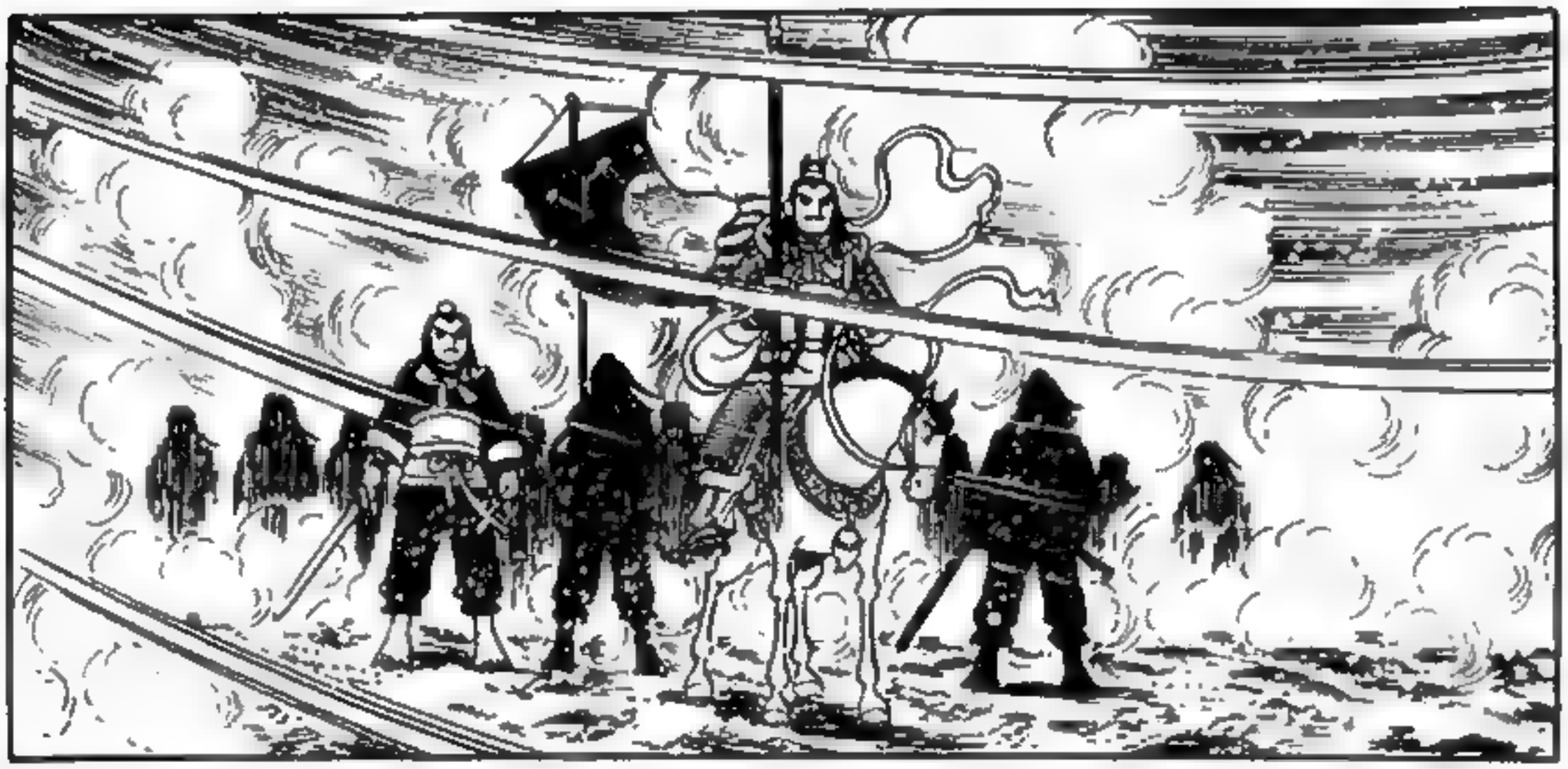
SEEMS LIKE KONGMING IS COOKING UP ANOTHER SCHEME...

Y-YES, SIR, THERE WAS DEFINITELY SOMETHING OTHERWORDLY ABOUT THEM.
SUPERNATURAL SOLDIERS?


YES, SIR.
WE WILL MARCH OUT WITH OUR ARMY AND APPREHEND KONGMING!

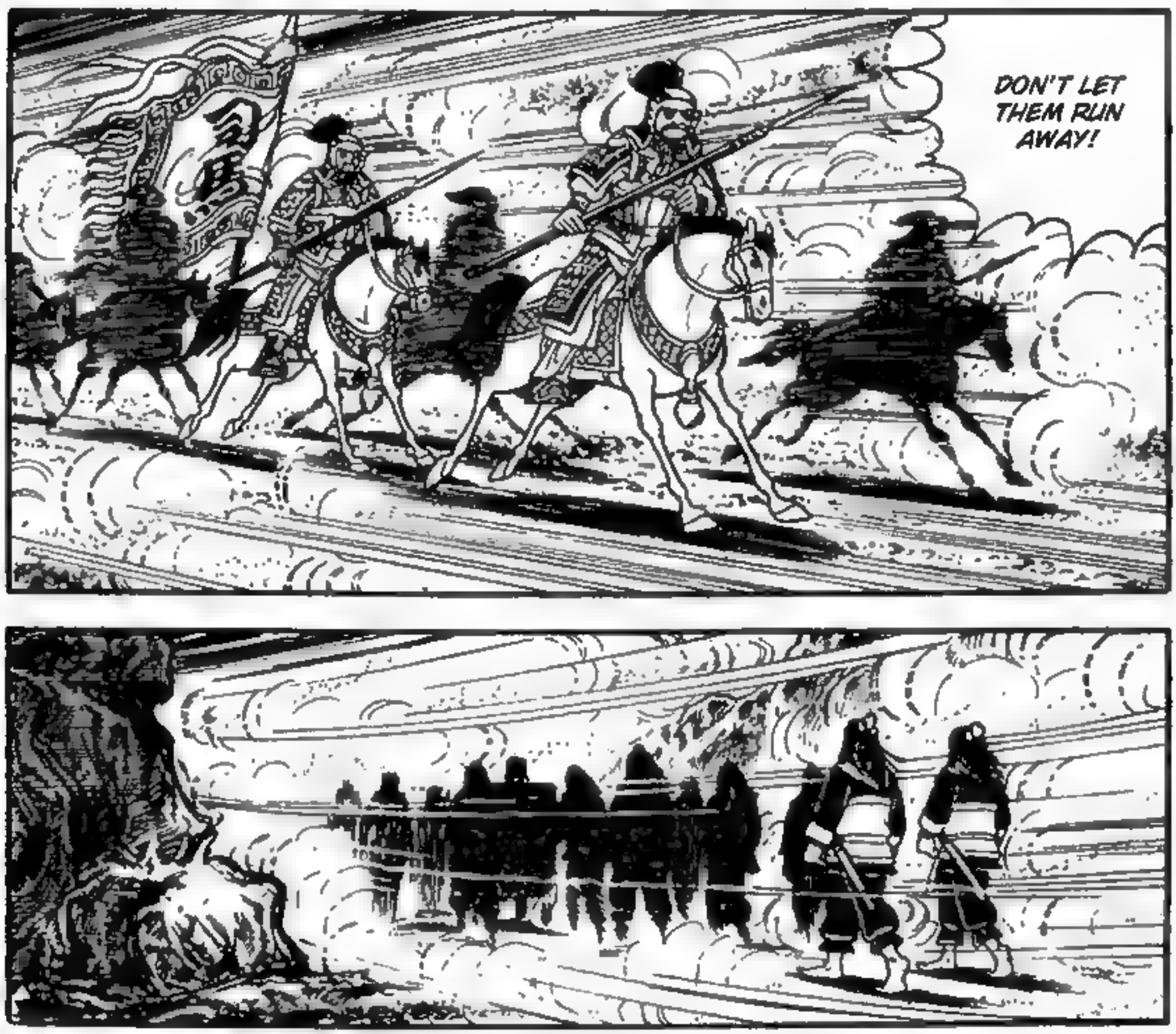

SIR!
OVER THERE!
HMM, THE
WINDS ARE
STRONG
TODAY...



PAY NO HEED TO KONGMING'S PETTY TRICK! CHARGE!

A BIG DIPPER BANNER AND SOLDIERS DRESSED AS GODS... NO WONDER THE SCOUTS WERE SPOOKED

GOOD,
NOW FALL
BACK.

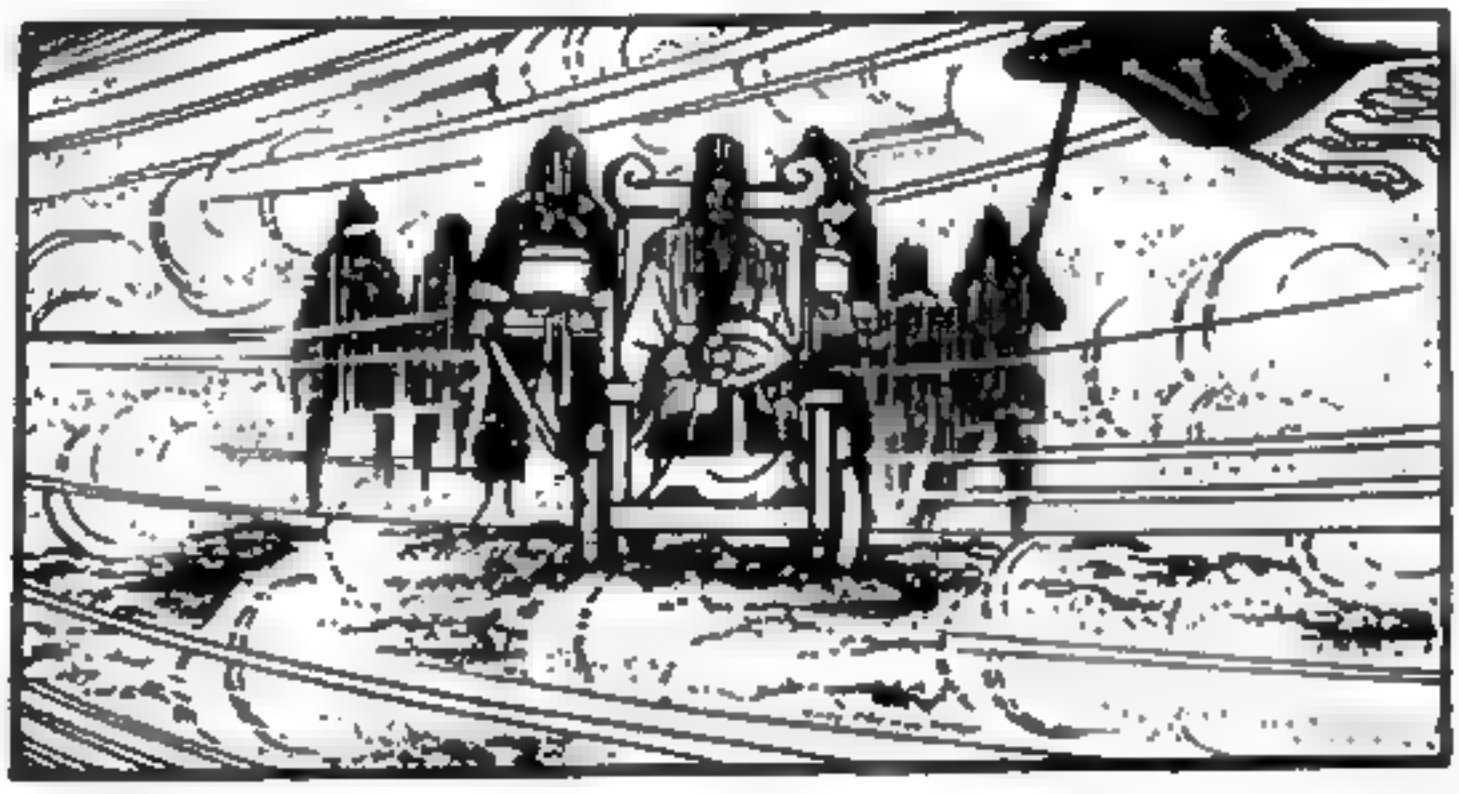

DON'T LET
THEM RUN
AWAY!

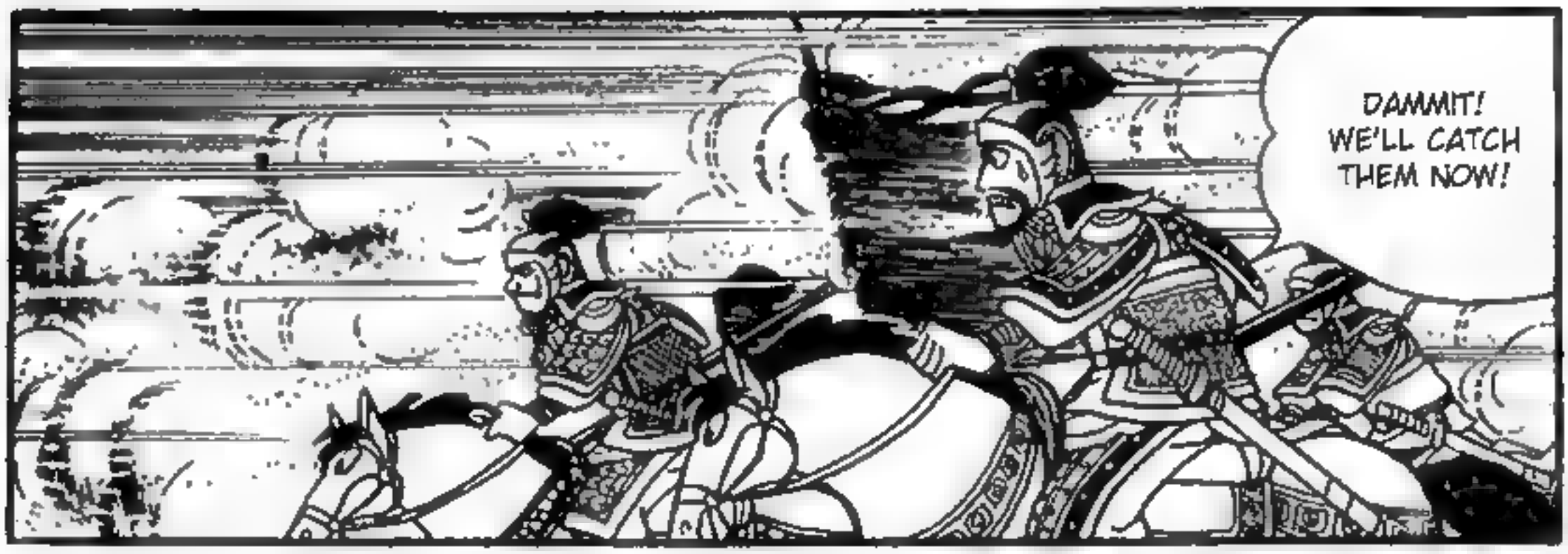
THAT'S ODD. WE'RE CHASING THEM BUT I DON'T GET THE SENSE THAT WE'RE GETTING ANY CLOSER...

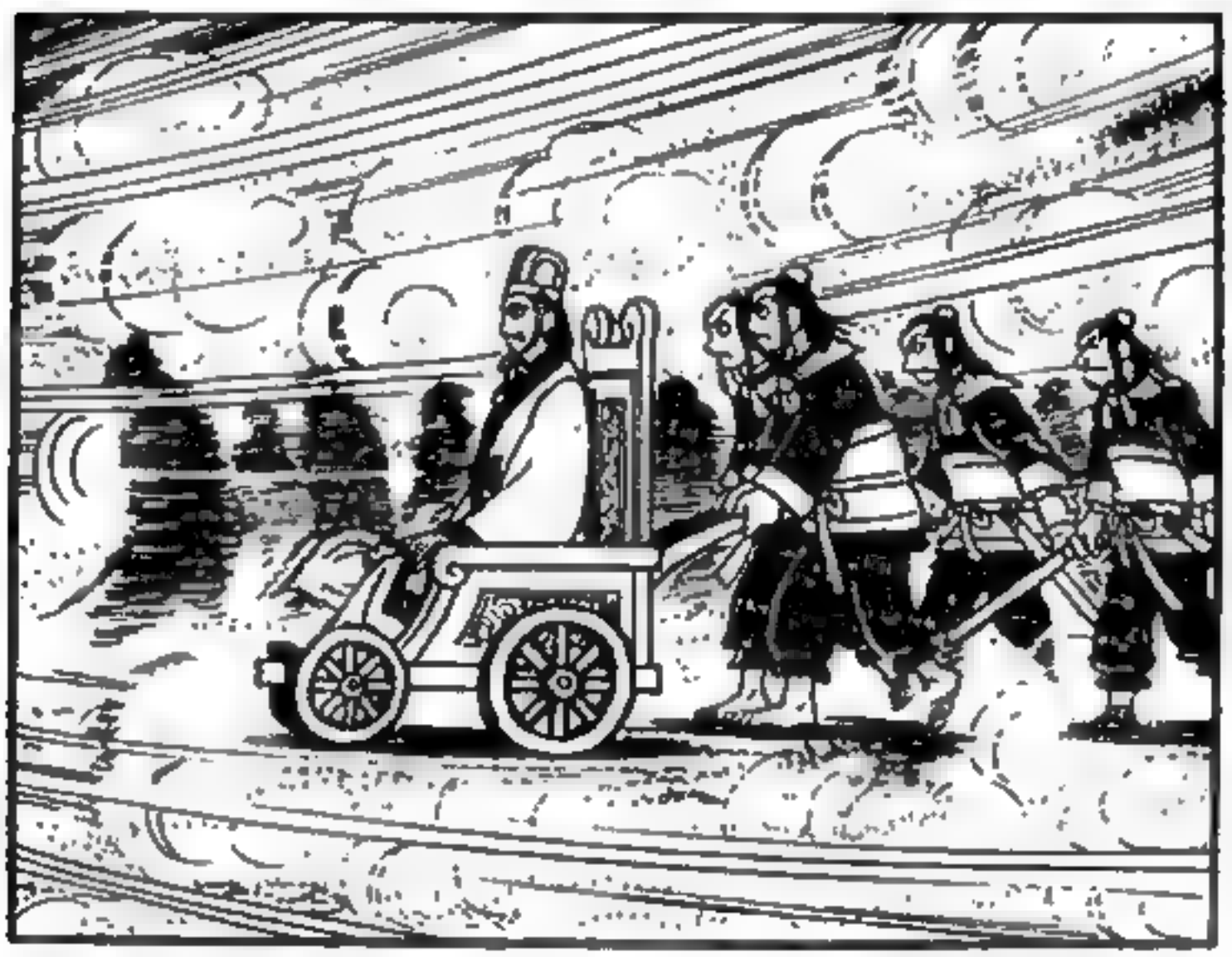
AT THIS RATE, OUR HORSES WILL RUN OUT OF STAMINA.

WHAT IN HEAVENS IS GOING ON? THE ENEMIES ARE ONLY LEISURELY WALKING AWAY...

AH! THEY STOPPED!




DAMMIT! WE'LL CATCH THEM NOW!



STOP RIGHT THERE! DON'T THINK YOU CAN OUTRUN US!

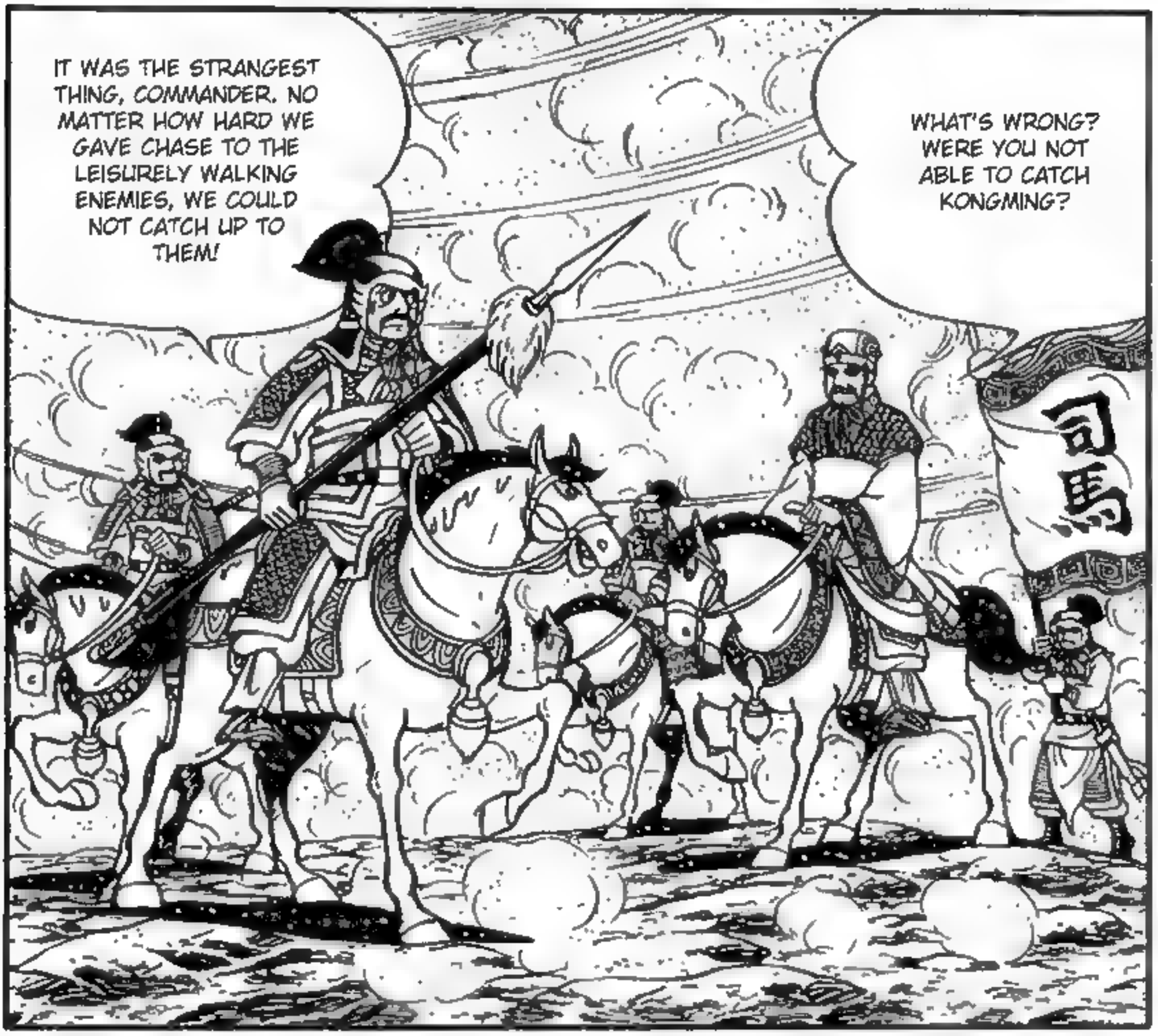
NO MATTER HOW HARD THE WEI TROOPS GAVE CHASE, THEY COULD NOT CATCH UP TO KONGMING

THIS IS NO GOOD! OUR HORSES ARE ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSING FROM EXHAUSTION!

I... I DON'T KNOW! I'VE NEVER EXPERI-ENCED ANYTHING SO EERIE!

CHASING THEM ANY FARTHER IS FUTILE. WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

司馬


IT WAS THE STRANGEST THING, COMMANDER. NO MATTER HOW HARD WE GAVE CHASE TO THE LEISURELY WALKING ENEMIES, WE COULD NOT CATCH UP TO THEM!
WHAT'S WRONG? WERE YOU NOT ABLE TO CATCH KONGMING?
司馬

YES, AND AS YOU MAY TELL FROM OUR HORSES, THEY'RE ALREADY DEAD-TIRED.

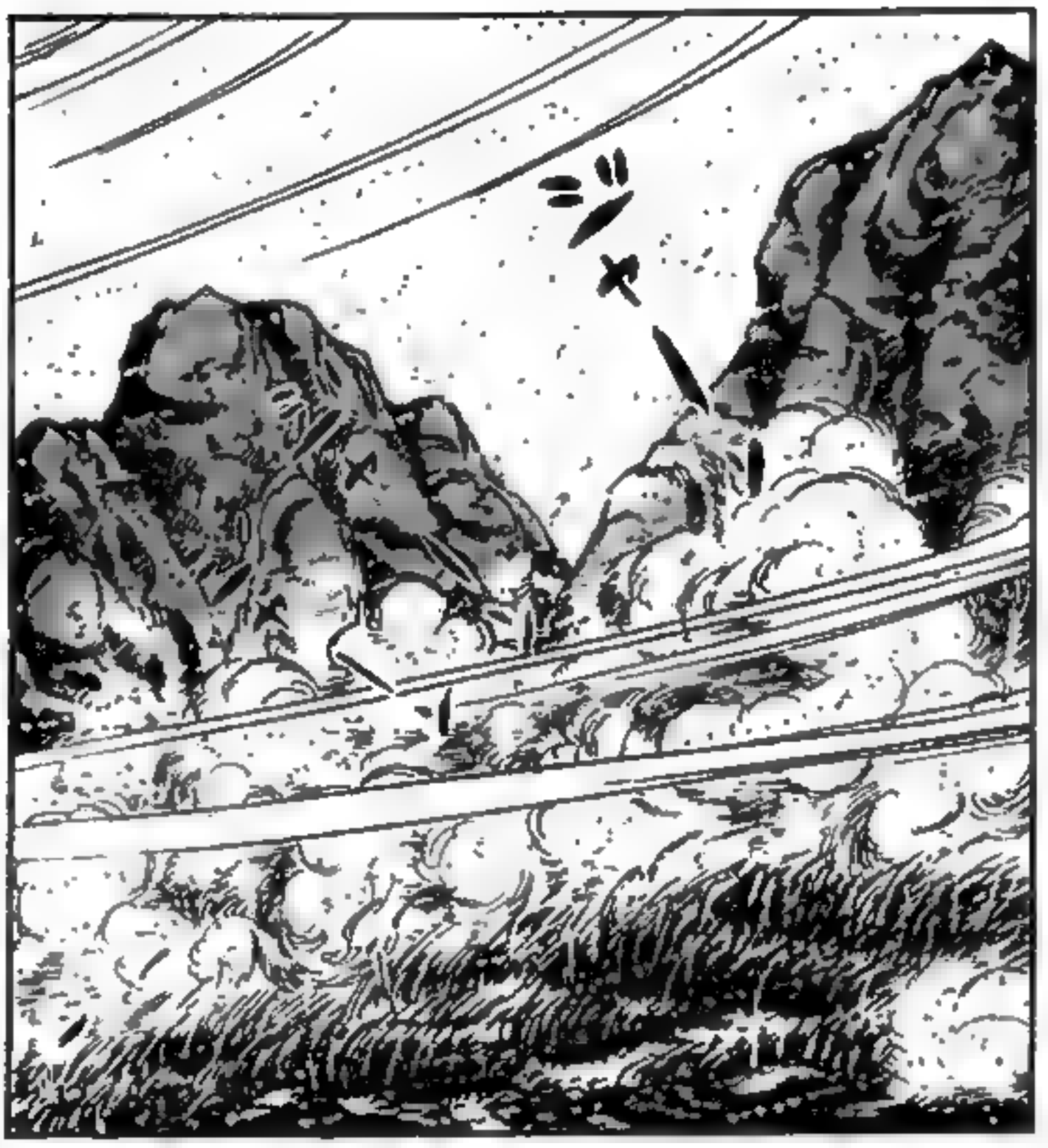
司馬
YOU COULDN'T CATCH UP?

LET US WITHDRAW BACK TO SHANGGUI!

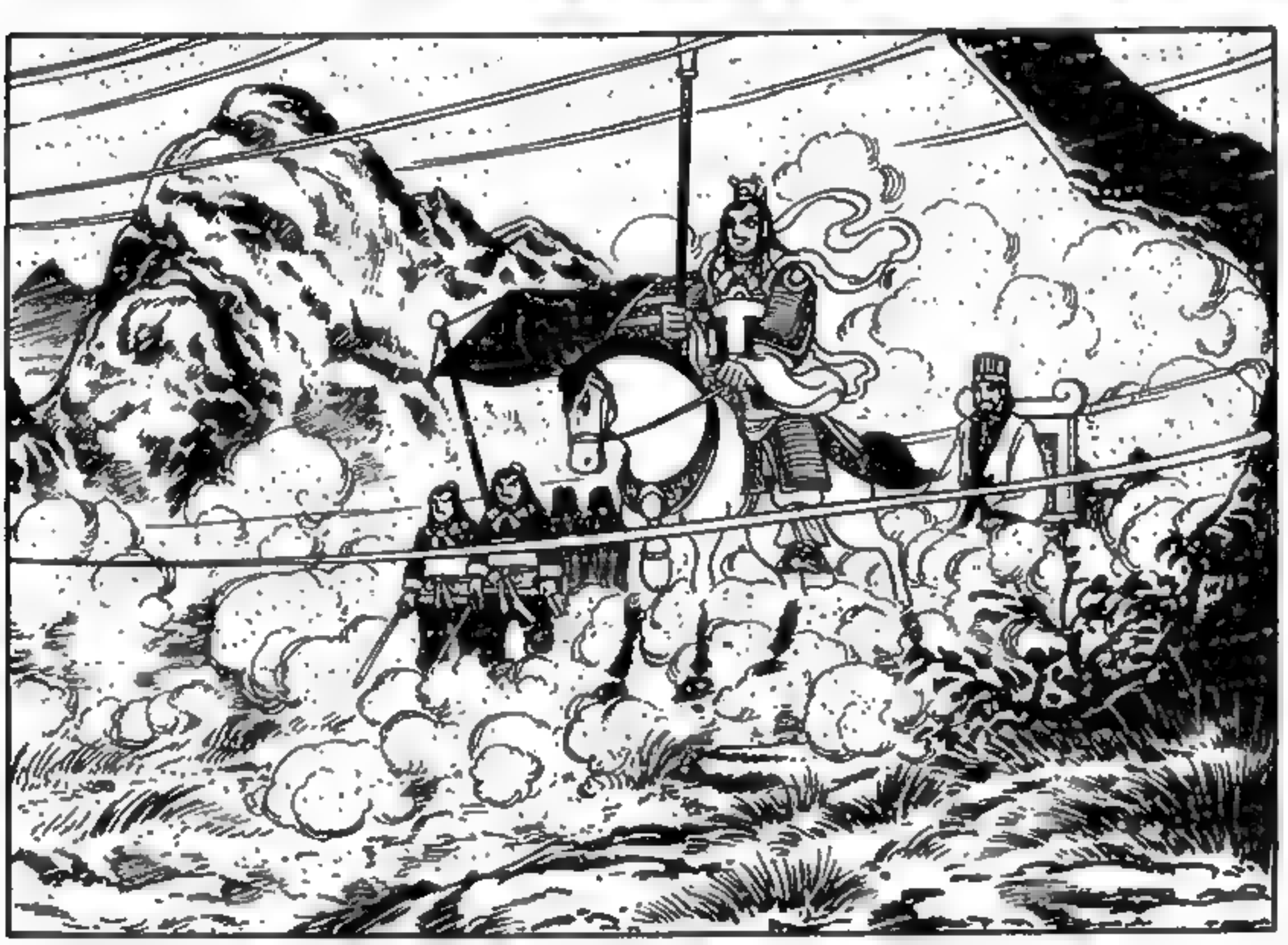
WHATEVER THE CASE, IT SEEMS WE'RE DISAD-VANTAGED HERE. WE BETTER WITHDRAW BEFORE FALLING INTO A TRAP.
DON'T TELL ME THAT KONGMING REALLY DOES KNOW THE MYTHICAL MAGIC OF FORESHORT-ENING THE LAND...

司馬

HM?



AHH!



CATCH HIM! NOW'S OUR CHANCE!

H-HOW CAN HE APPEAR HERE WHEN HE SHOULD BE FAR BEHIND US?

DO YOU THINK YOU CAN PLAY AROUND WITH US!?

RUNNING AWAY AGAIN!?

NO MATTER HOW HARD SIMA YI WHIPPED HIS HORSE HE TOO, FAILED TO GET ANY NEARER TO KONGMING AND HIS DIVINT BODYGUARDS

PANT PANT

HUFF HUFF

RETREAT TO SHANGGUI!

T-THIS IS MOST DEFI-NITELY NOT NATURAL...

AHH!

HOW CAN WE MORTALS EVER WIN AGAINST SUPERNATURAL BEINGS!?

T-THOSE DIVINE BODYGUARDS MUST BE THE REAL THING!

AGHH! KONGMING APPEARED OUT OF THIN AIR AGAIN!

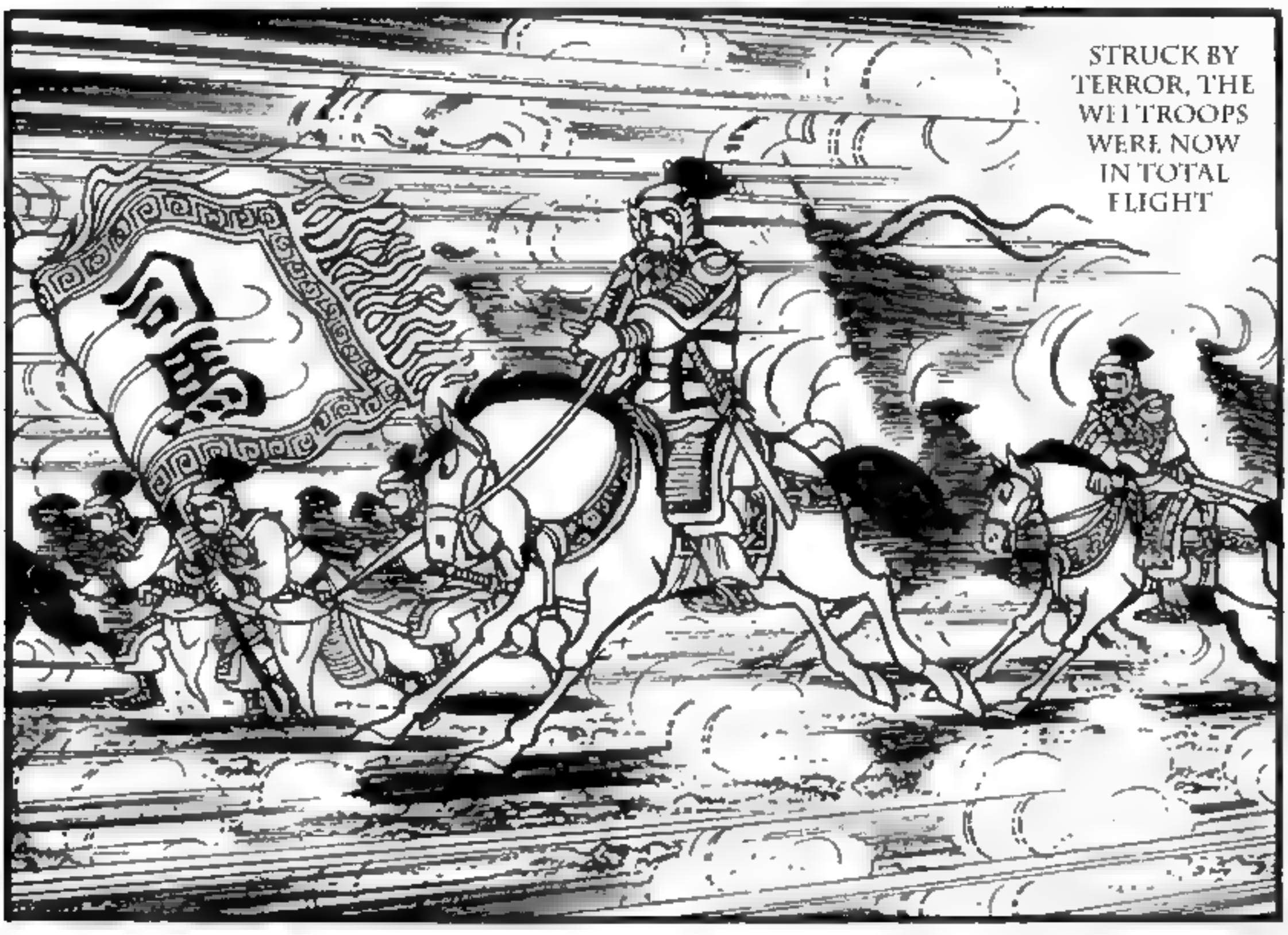
PAY NO HEED, MEN! IGNORE THEM AND FOCUS ON WITHDRAWING TO SHANGGU!

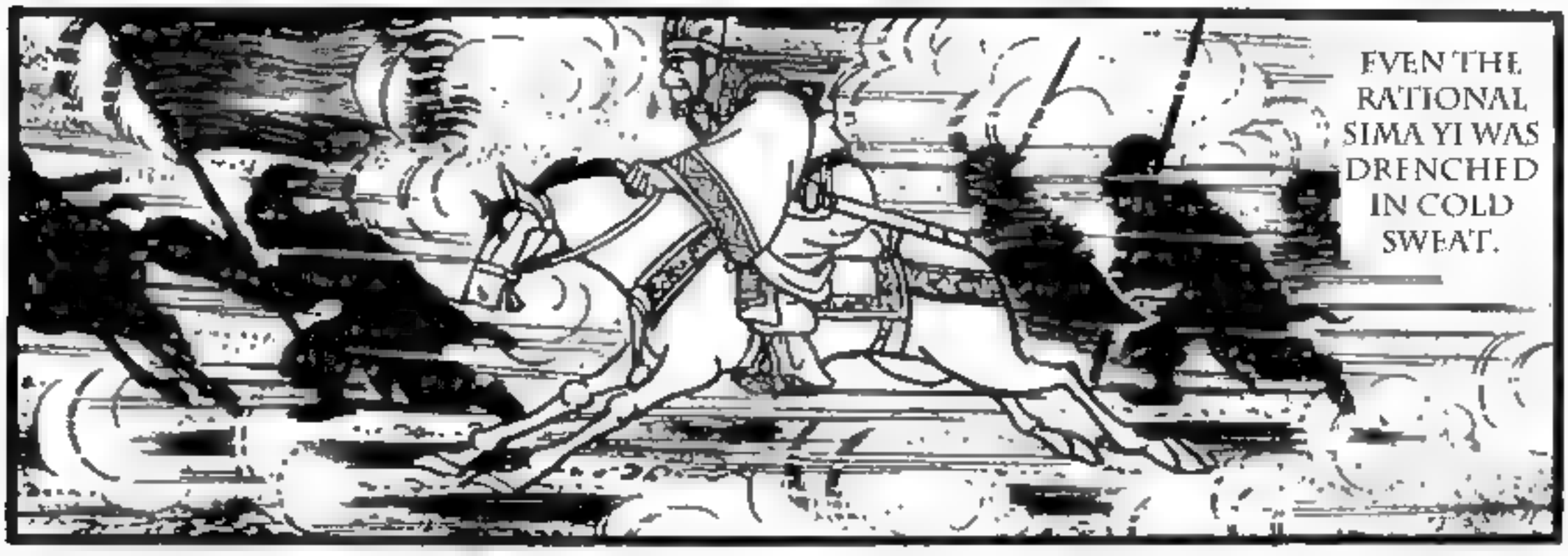
OH NO! PANIC AND TERROR HAS SET AMONGST THE TROOPS!

JUST HOW MANY OF THEM ARE THERE!?
AGHH! THEY'RE HERE TOO!?

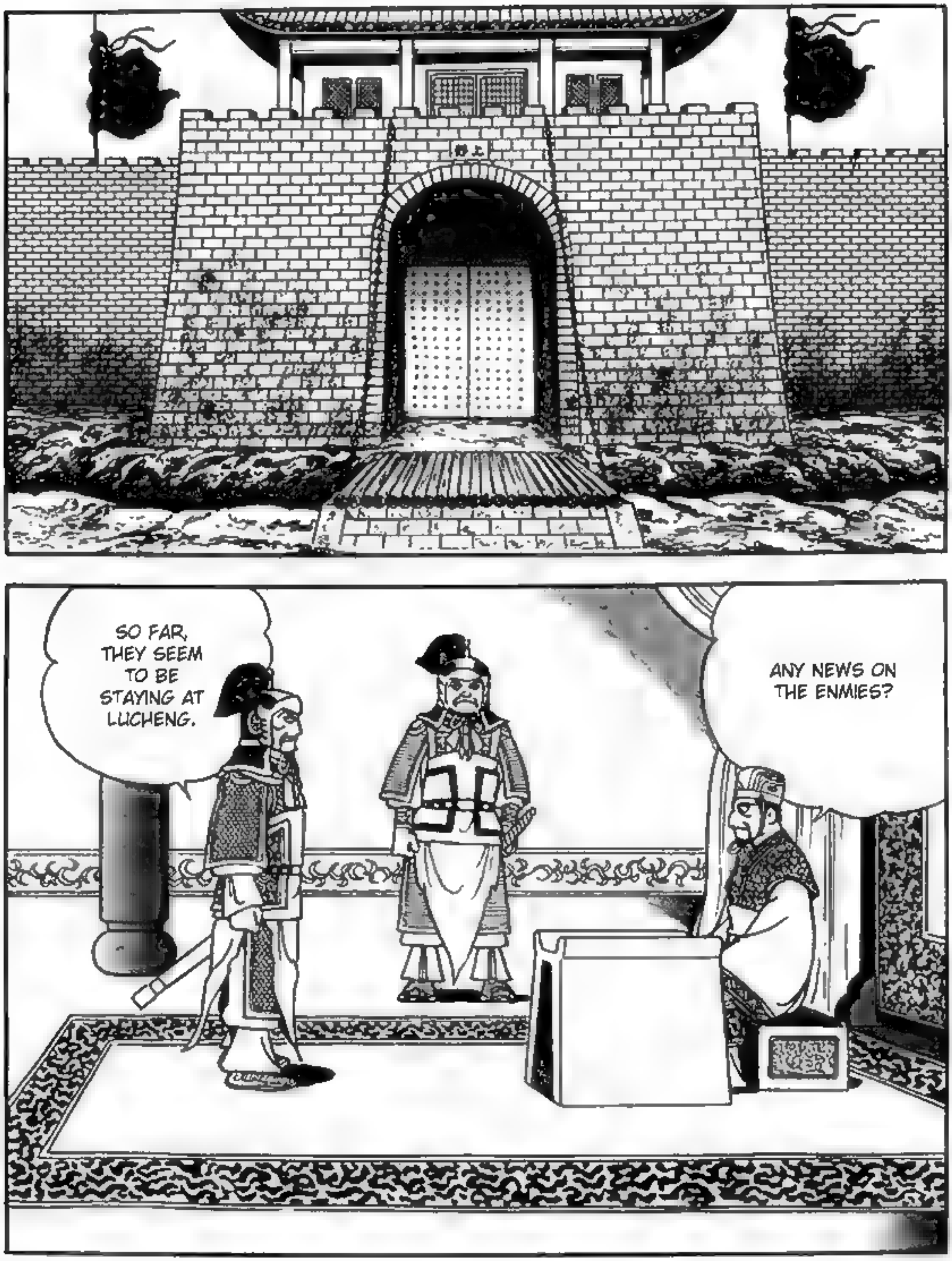
RETREAT! RETREAT AT FULL SPEED!

WE'RE WALKING ON A THIN LINE BETWEEN ANNHILATION AND SURVIVAL!
PERHAPS KONGMING HAS ACTUALLY CAST A SPELL OVER OUR TROOPS HERE! BUT THEN THAT MEANS...


STRUCK BY TERROR, THE WEI TROOPS WERE NOW IN TOTAL FLIGHT

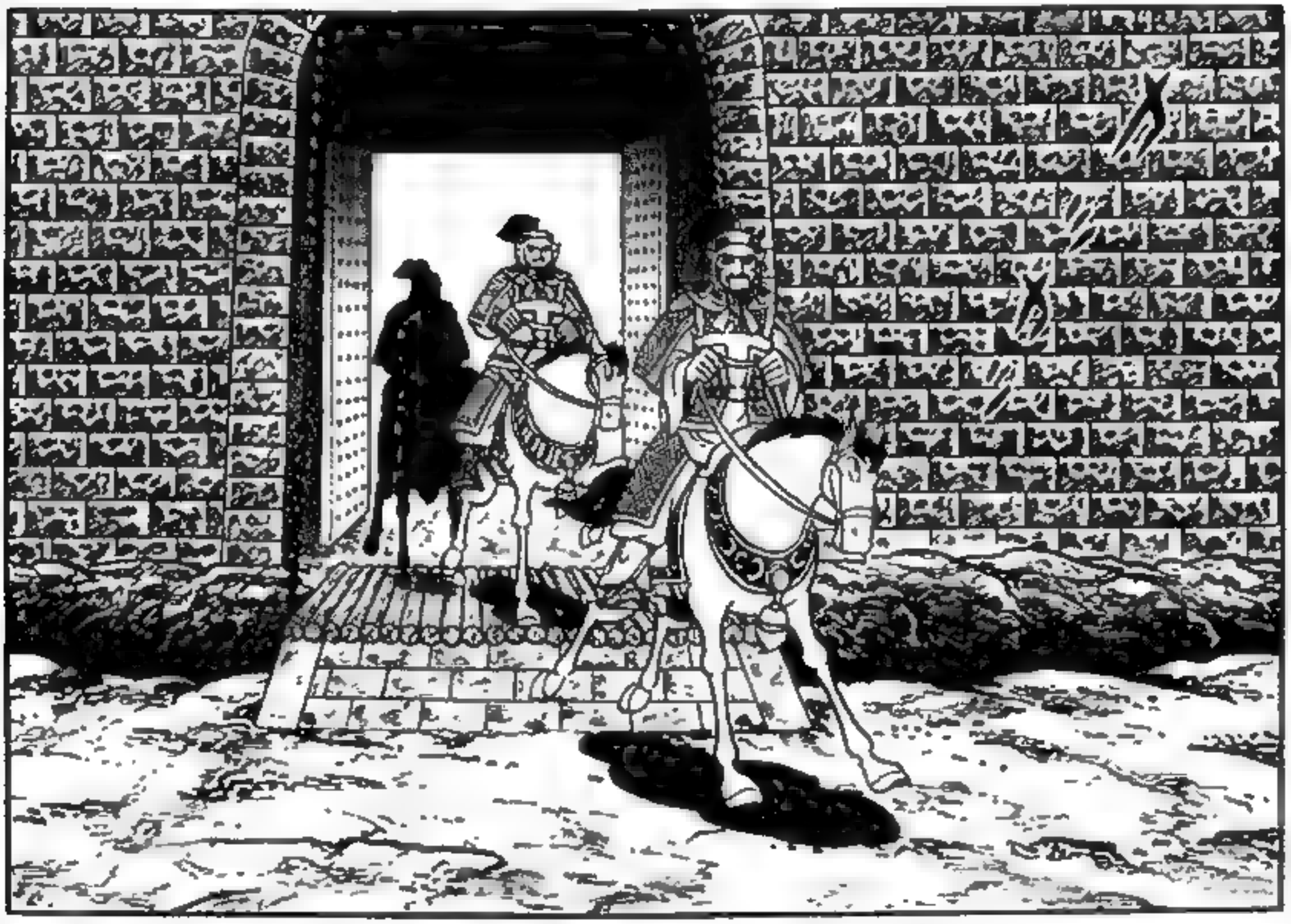

EVEN THE RATIONAL SIMA YI WAS DRENCHED IN COLD SWEAT.

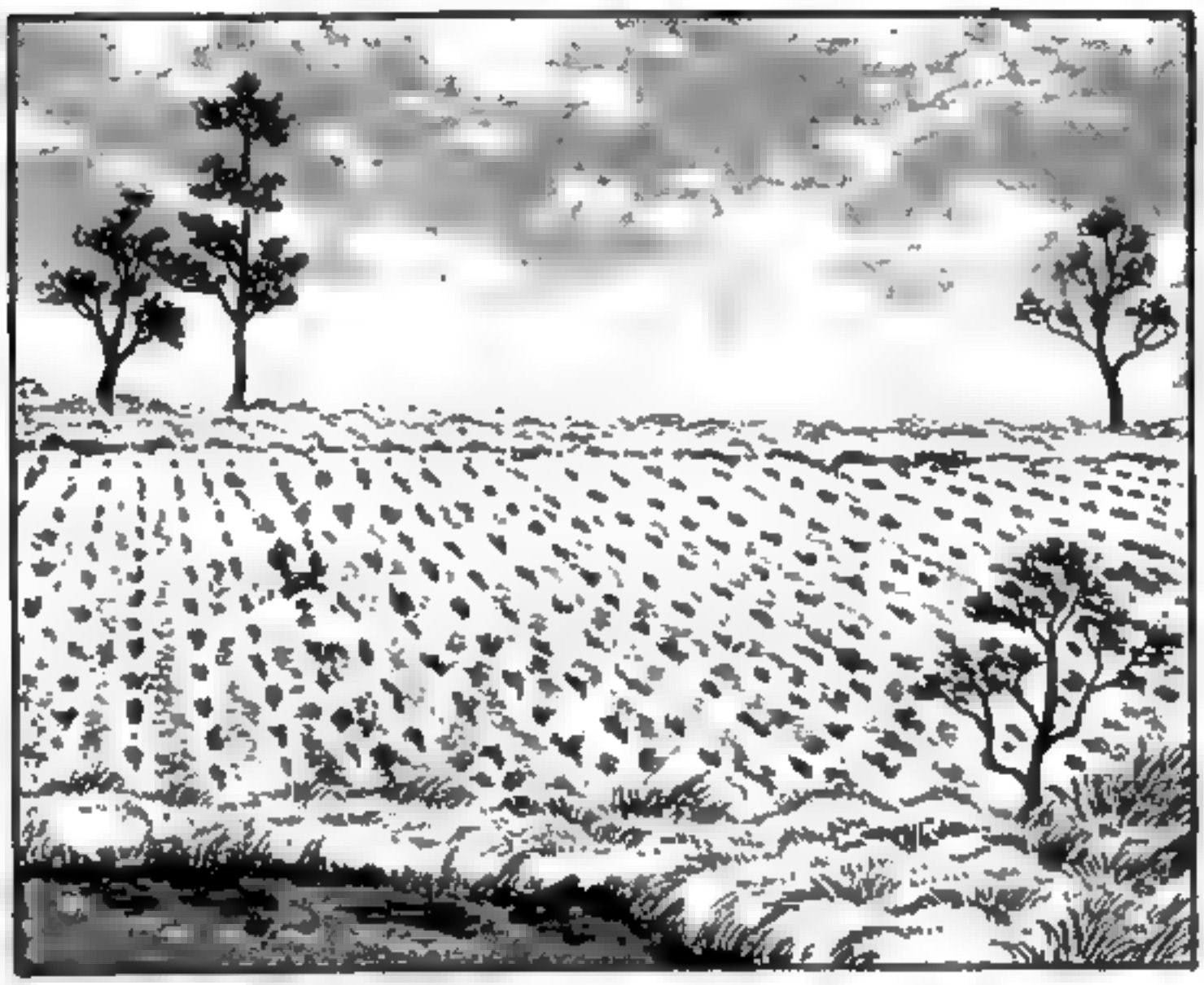
BATTLE AMIDST THE WHEAT FIELDS



YES, SIR.
GO OUT AND TAKE ANOTHER LOOK.

THAT'S ODD, WHY WOULD THEY BE SITTING STILL AT LUCHENG?





WHY HAVE THE WHEAT FIELDS HERE ALREADY BEEN HAR-VESTED?

YOU THERE! COME OUT THIS INSTANT!

HM?

A SHU SOLDIER?
ACK!
STOP RIGHT THERE!
COOPERATE AND I WON'T BE FORCED TO TAKE YOUR LIFE.
AGHH!

魏

WELL DONE. LET'S INTERRO-GATE HIM.

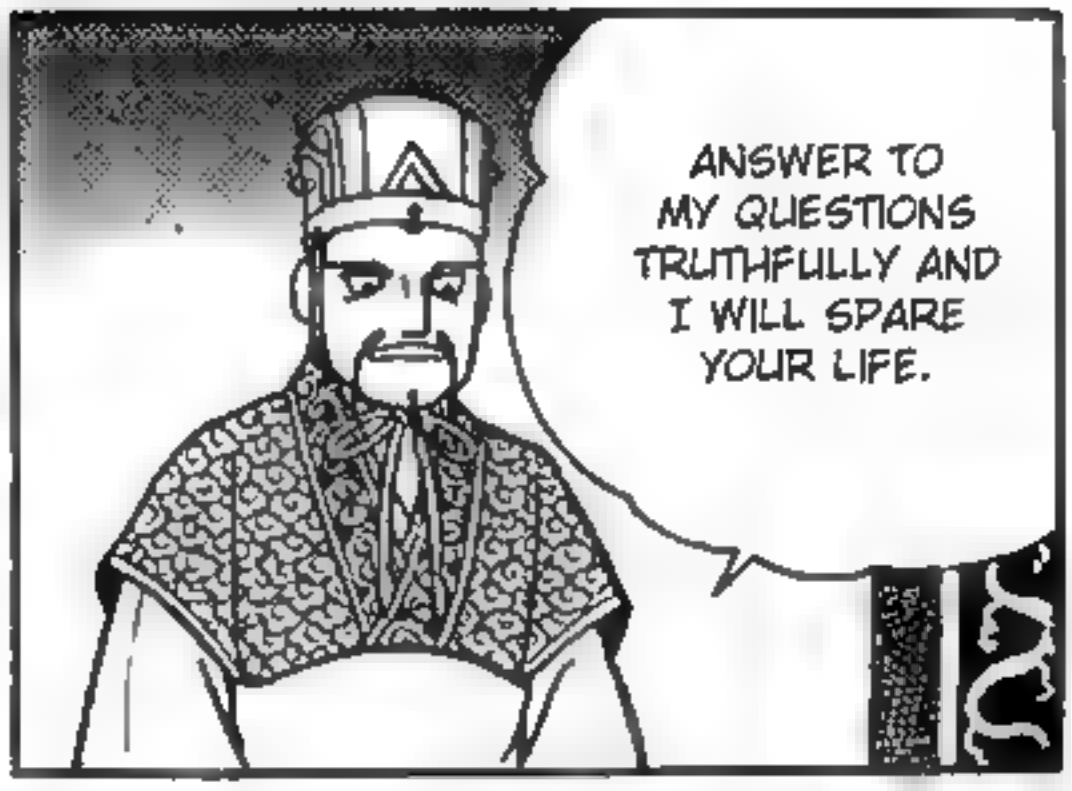
YES, SIR.

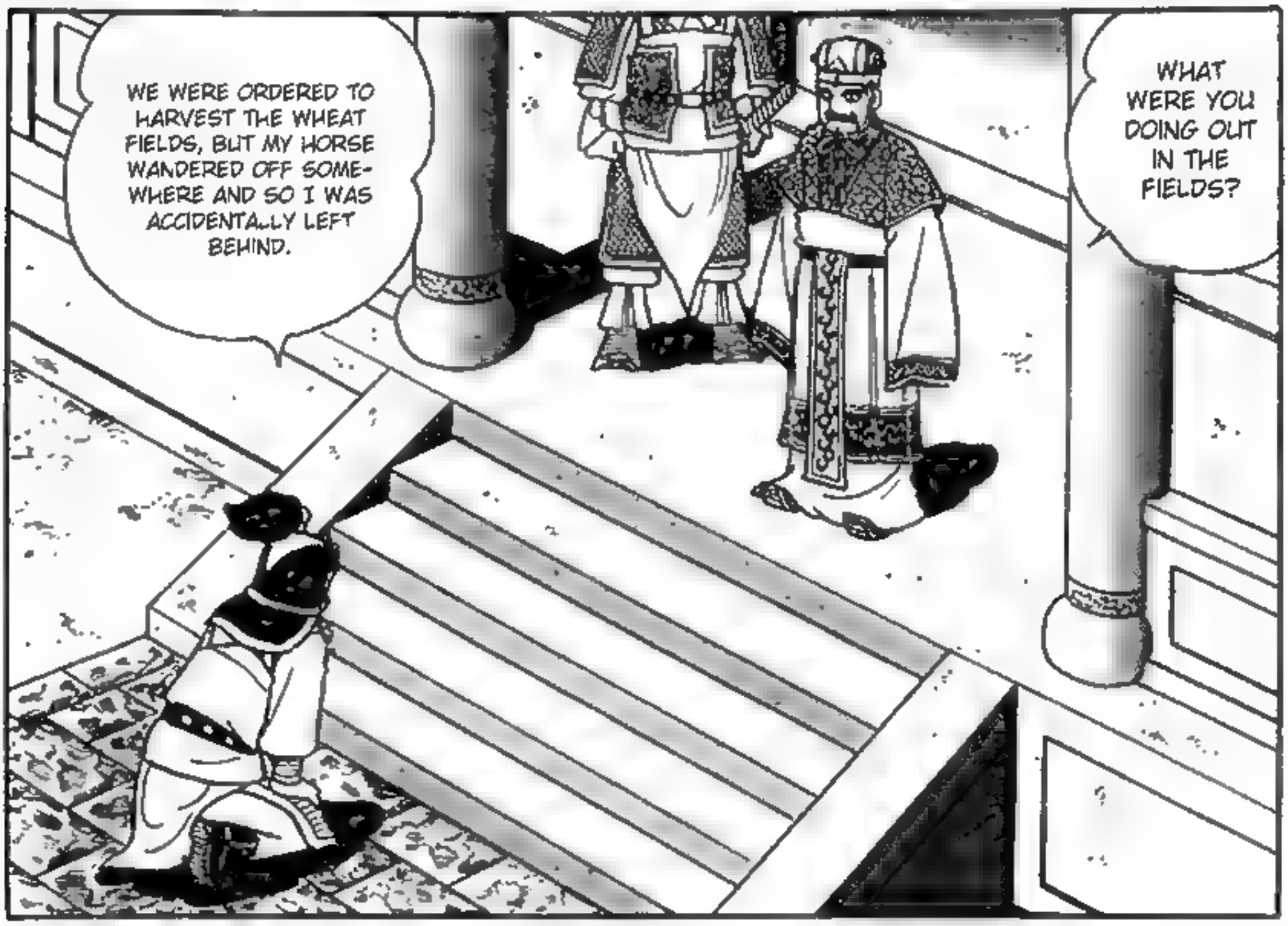
YOU APPREHENDED A SHU SOLDIER?

YES, SIR.

THIS IS THE MAN?

Y-YES, SIR...


ANSWER TO MY QUESTIONS TRUTHFULLY AND I WILL SPARE YOUR LIFE.


WE WERE ORDERED TO HARVEST THE WHEAT FIELDS, BUT MY HORSE WANDERED OFF SOME-WHERE AND SO I WAS ACCIDENTALLY LEFT BEHIND.
WHAT WERE YOU DOING OUT IN THE FIELDS?

YES, THE FIELD WHERE I FOUND THIS MAN HIDING HAD BEEN CLEANLY HARVESTED OF ALL ITS WHEAT.

HARVEST THE WHEAT!?

WE USED BODY DOUBLES, SIR.

ABOUT THE DIVINE SOLDIERS THE OTHER DAY... DO YOU KNOW HOW KONGMING ACCOMPLISHED THE TRICK OF MAKING HIMSELF APPEAR AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS?

SO THAT'S WHAT KONGMING WAS AIMING FOR... SCARING US TO STAY WITHIN THE WALLS OF SHANGGUI WHILE HIS TROOPS HARVEST THE WHEAT...

YES, THE KONGMING YOU SAW WERE MERELY GENERALS JIANG WEI, MA DAI, AND WEI YAN DRESSED UP AS HIM.

BODY DOUBLES!?

THAT WAS A BIT MORE COMPLICATED TRICK, SIR.

THEN WHAT ABOUT THE TRICK THAT ALLOWED US TO NEVER CATCH HIM NO MATTER HOW HARD WE GAVE CHASE?

FIRST A FAKE KONGMING WOULD LURE YOUR TROOPS TO GIVE CHASE
AFTER THE FIRST KONGMING HAD HID A SECOND KONGMING WOULD APPEAR AT ANOTHER POINT.
AND THEN HE WOULD QUICKLY HIDE BY A NEARBY ROCK OR BUSHES. THIS WAS ONLY POSSIBLE DUE TO THE SANDSTORM BLOWING THAT DAY TO OBSCURE YOUR VISION
THUS YOUR TROOPS COULD CONTINUE GIVING CHASE WITHOUT EVER CATCHING THE FAKE KONGMING

YES, SIR.

SO WE WERE ONLY EVER CHASING THE DIFFERENT FAKE KONGMINGS POPPING UP FROM THEIR HIDING SPOTS!?

YES, HE TOOK CAREFUL OBSER-VATIONS OF THE SKY AND WAITED UNTIL THE WEATHER WAS JUST RIGHT.

DOES THAT MEAN HE EVEN ACCOUNTED FOR THAT WEATHER?

YES, SIR.

LET THIS MAN GO.

SO THERE WAS NOTHING SUPERNATURAL ABOUT IT...

THOUGH HE IS MY ENEMY, I CANNOT HELP BEING ASTOUNDED BY HIS BRILLIANCE.

I FELL RIGHT INTO KONGMING'S TRAP ONCE AGAIN.

I'VE SENT MY SPIES TO LUCHENG AND IT APPEARS THEY ARE ONLY MAKING A FALSE DISPLAY OF THERE BEING A LARGE SHU ARMY GARRISONED THERE. THEIR TRUE NUMBERS ARE QUITE FEW.

GUO HUAI? WHY HAVE YOU COME?

SIR!

IT IS ONLY THANKS TO KONGMING THAT THEY MANAGED TO FOOL US UNTIL NOW.

YES, WE EASILY OUTNUMBER THEM.

REALLY!?

I WILL LEAD MY TROOPS TO ATTACK LUCHENG'S REAR WHILE YOU CAN ATTACK THE FRONT, SIR. THIS IS A GOLDEN CHANCE TO CATCH KONGMING!

HMM...

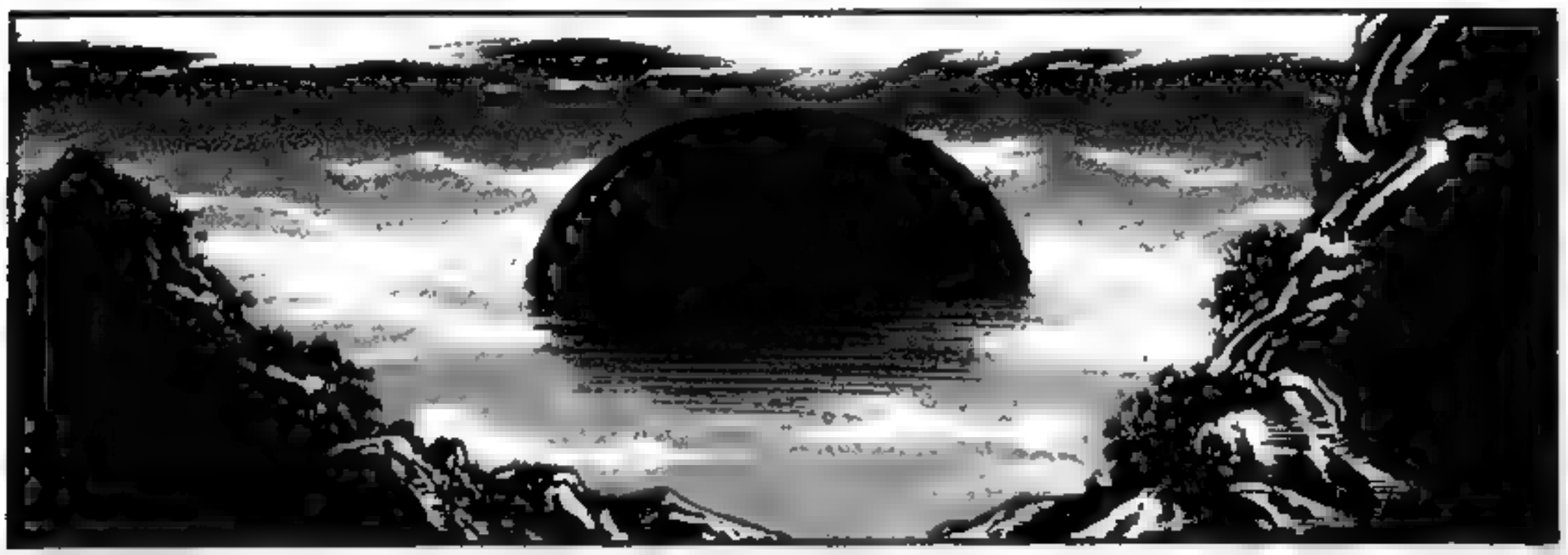
LUCHENG'S MOAT IS SHALLOW AND ITS WALLS ARE LOW. WE CAN EASILY CAPTURE THE CITY WITH KONGMING INSIDE IF WE MAKE A DEDICATED ASSAULT.

WE WILL SECRETLY MOVE OUT TONIGHT AND ATTACK AT DAWN TOMORROW.

YES, LUCHENG IS A SMALL CITY THAT CAN EASILY BE TAKEN.

YES, SIR!

PREPARE THE TROOPS!



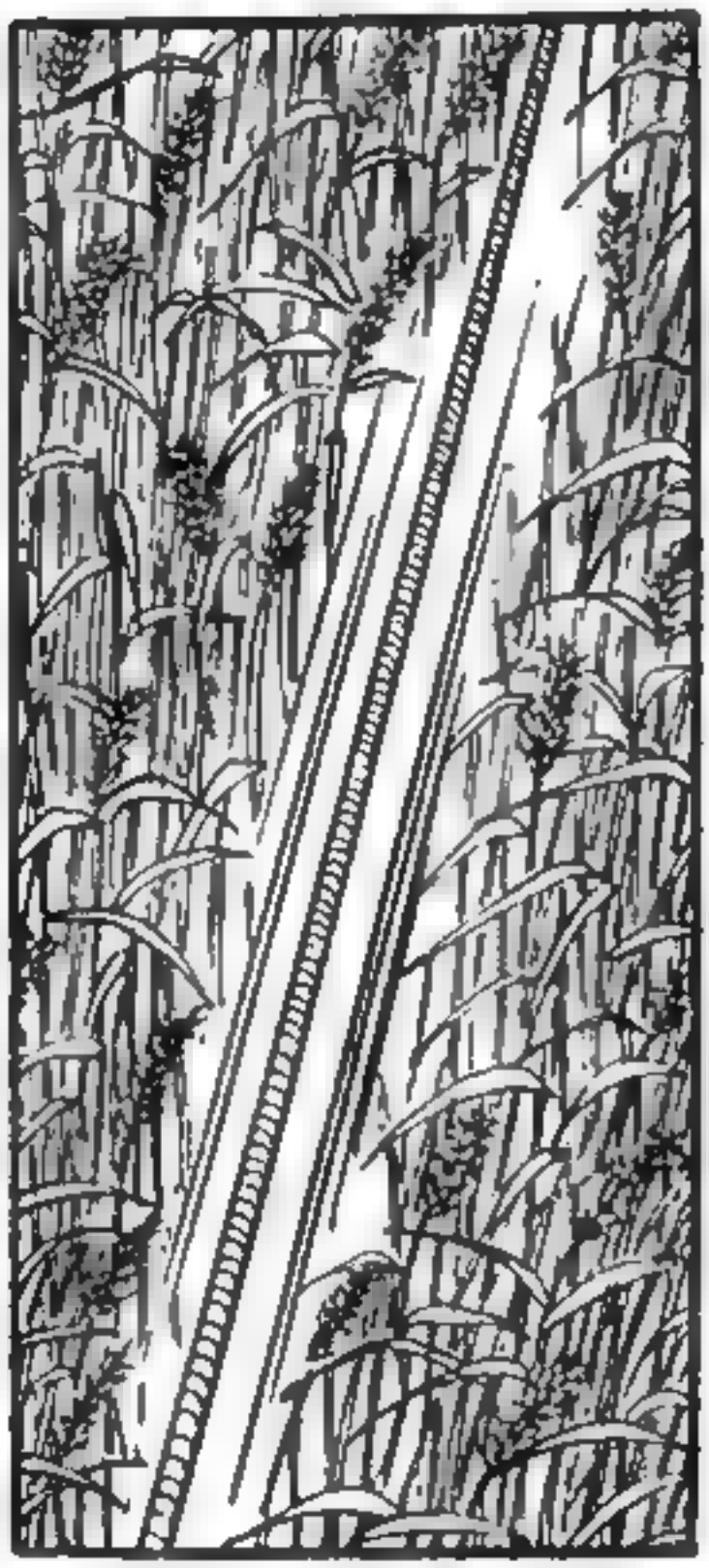
YES, SIR.
MAKE SURE TO SEND ME A SIGNAL AT LUCHENG SO WE CAN COORDINATE OUR ATTACK.
WELL THEN, I'LL SEE YOU AT LUCHENG. I'LL BE TAKING THE OTHER ROUTE.

THAT NIGHT, THE TROOPS OF GUO HUAI AND SIMA YI MADE A QUICK MARCH TO LUCHENG.

WE!
TROOPS!

RING RING!

RING RING!



YES, SIR.

SCOUTS HAVE REPORTED THAT WEI TROOPS ARE ON THEIR WAY HERE TO ATTACK LUCHENG. THIS CITY IS TOO SMALL TO WITHSTAND A MAJOR SIEGE. WE MUST COUNTER THE ENEMIES BY HIDING MOST OF OUR TROOPS OUTSIDE THE CITY.

馬岱

關

JIANG WEI, MA DAI.

魏

AND WEI YAN LED THEIR TROOPS OUTSIDE,

MA ZHONG,

中

AND HID

AMONGST THE WHEAT FIELDS

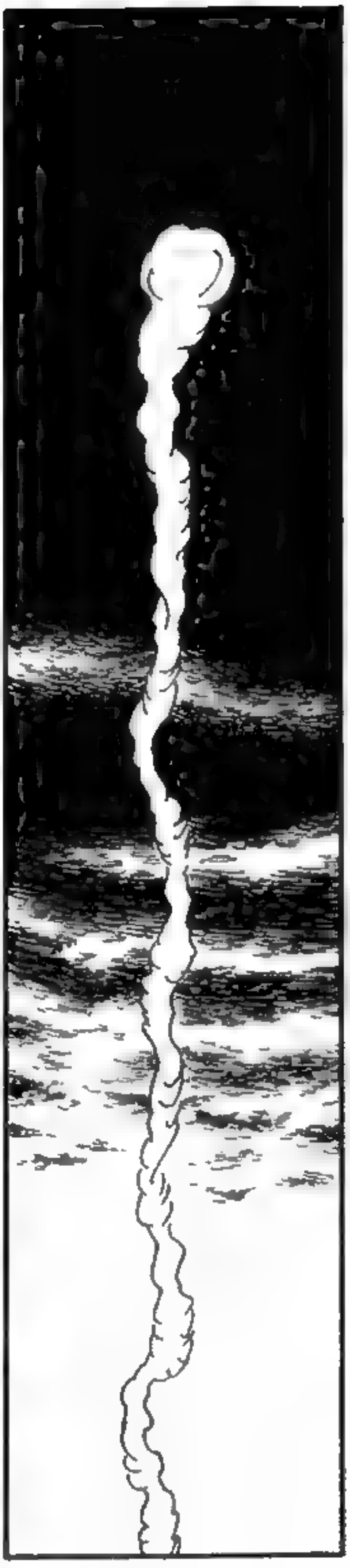
HAHA, THE ENEMIES ARE LIKELY STILL FAST ASLEEP.

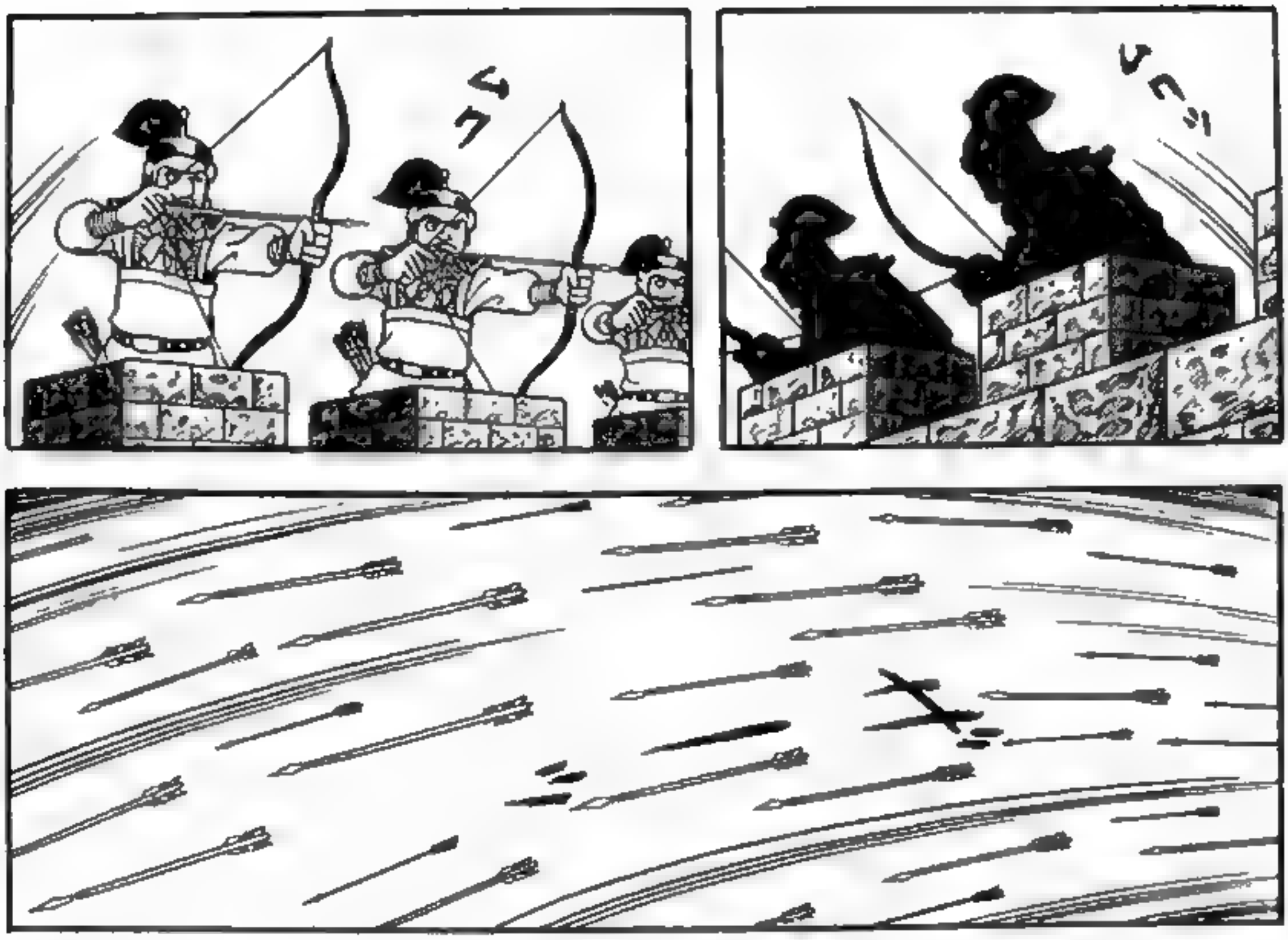
AH! OVER THERE!

NO, SIR.

STILL NO SIGNAL FROM GUO HUAI?

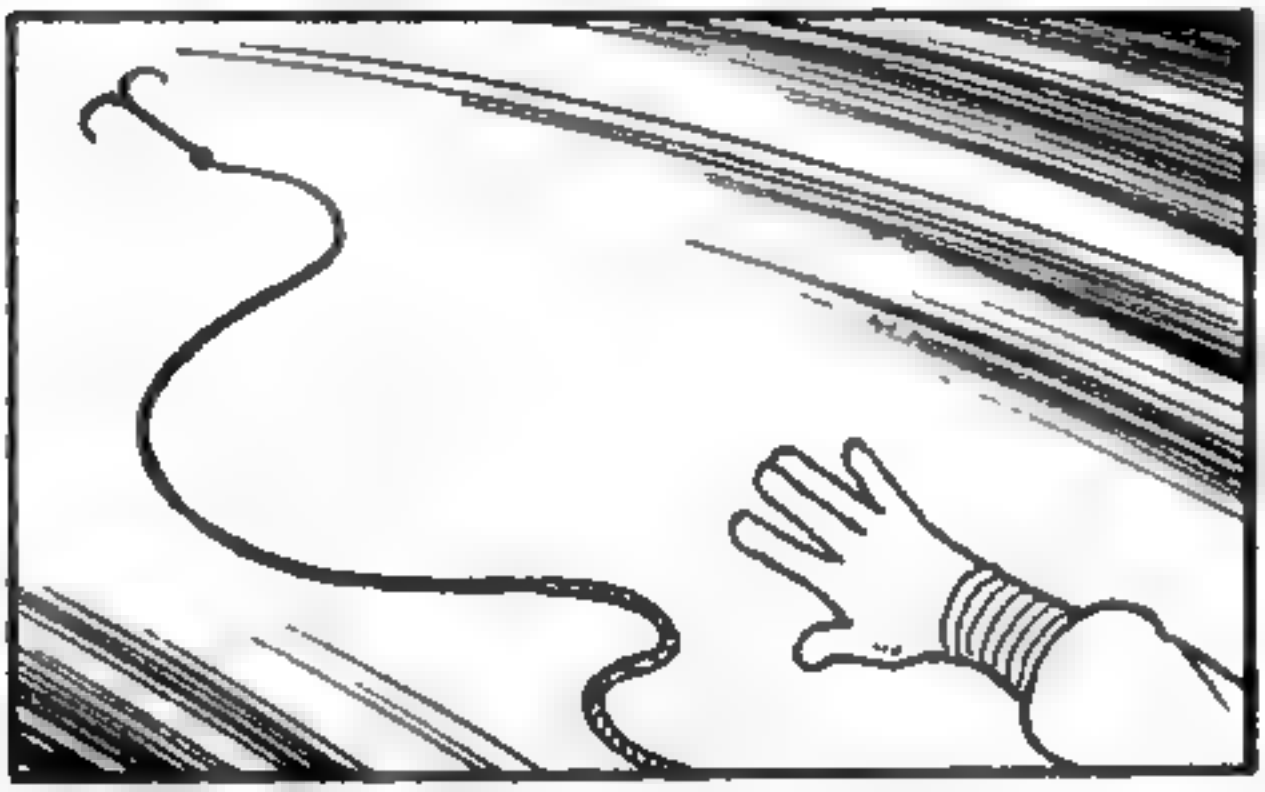
司馬
ATTACK!
木鬼
木鬼

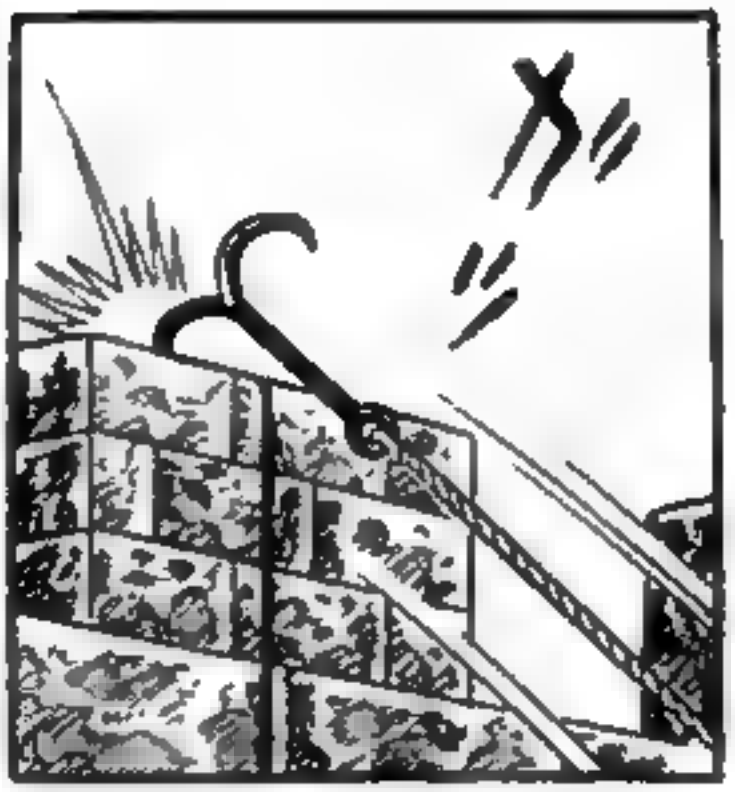


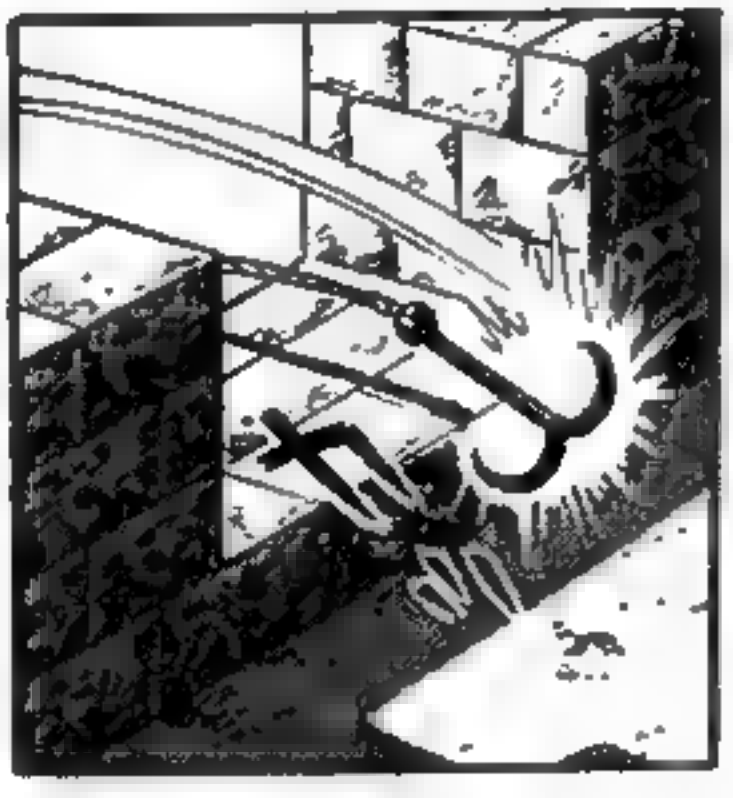

AGHHH!

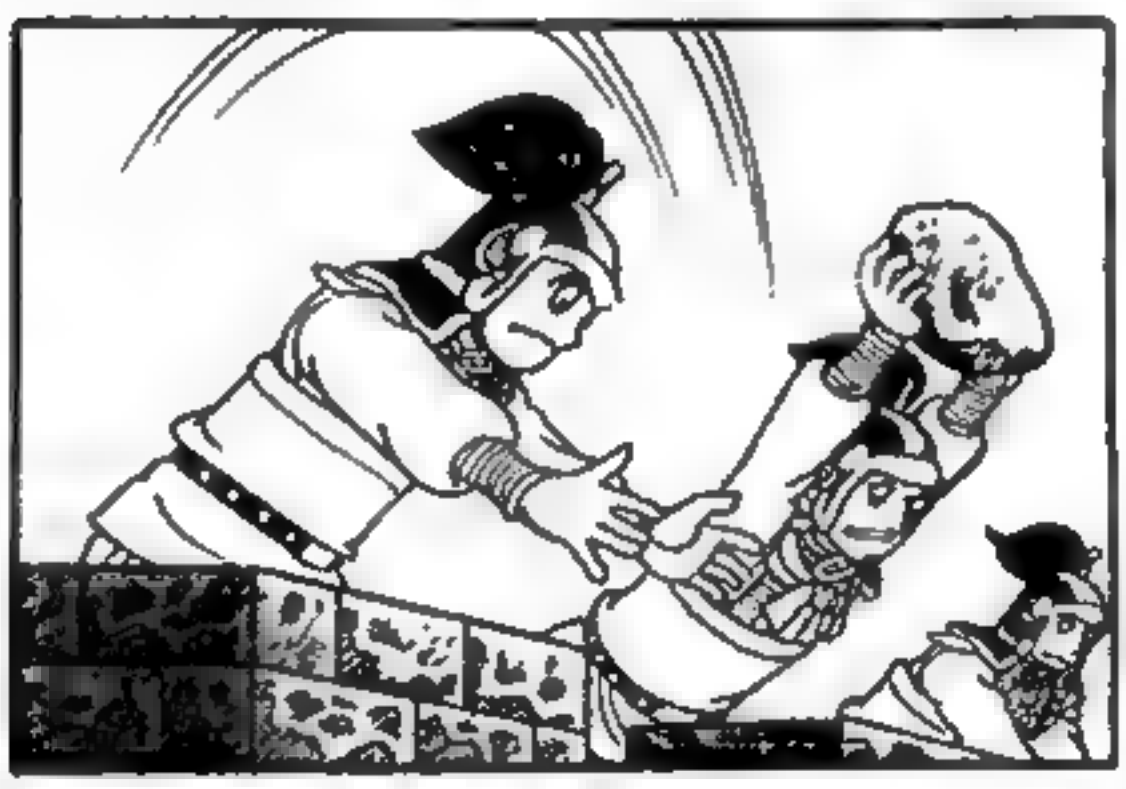
DO NOT FALTER! LUCHENG CAN STILL BE EASILY TAKEN!

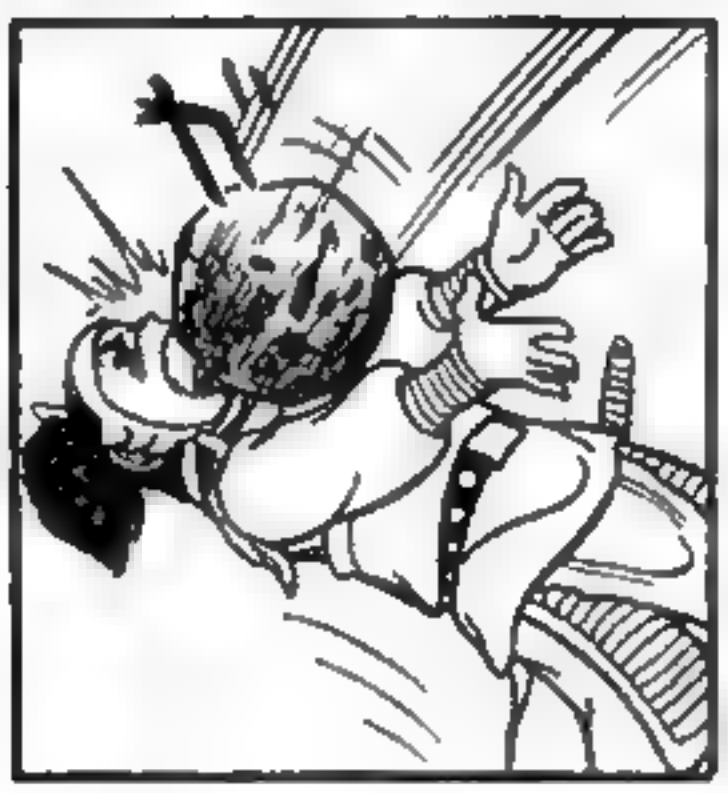
CURSES! DID KONGMING ALREADY EXPECT US!?

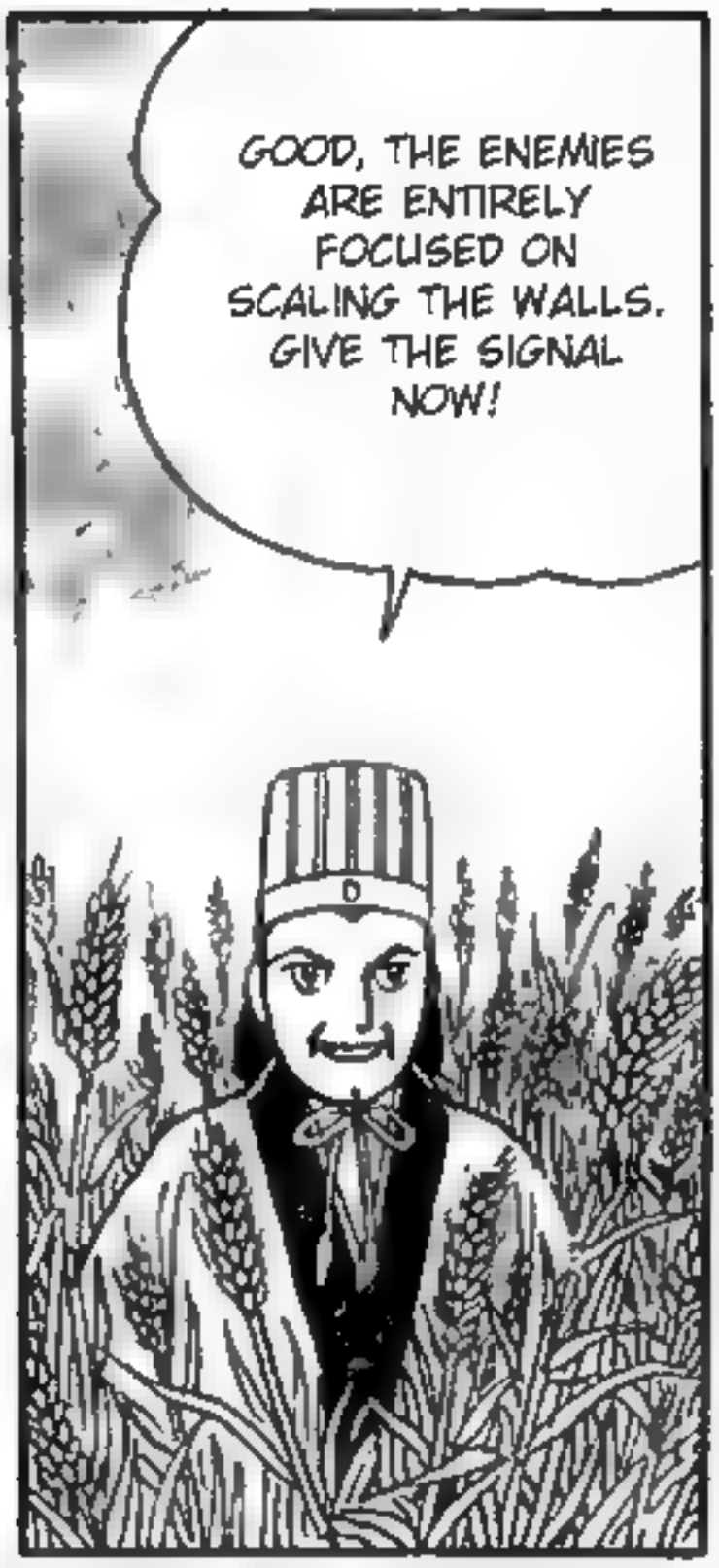











GOOD, THE ENEMIES ARE ENTIRELY FOCUSED ON SCALING THE WALLS. GIVE THE SIGNAL NOW!

WHA!

AGHH!

UGH!

GAHH!

AGHHH!

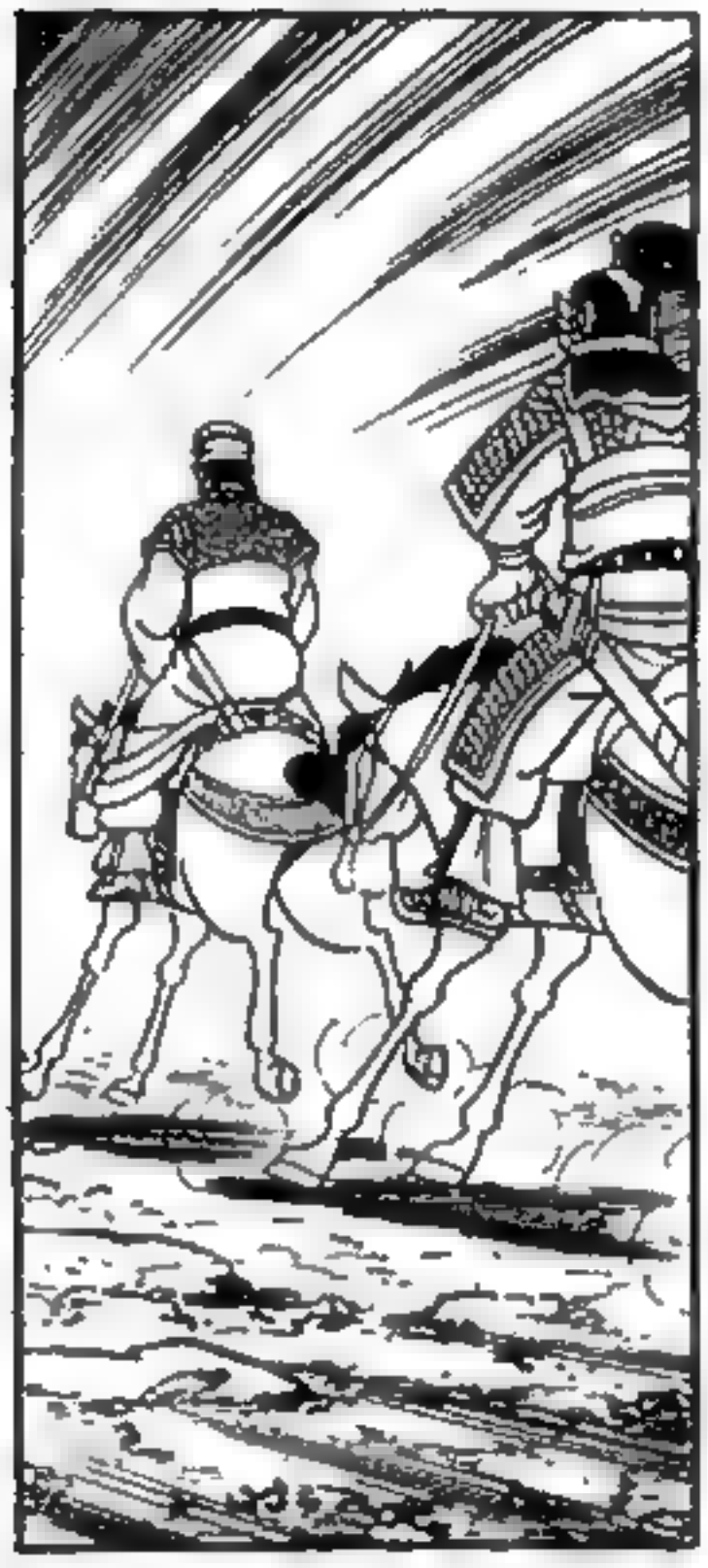
DON'T PANIC! FIGHT THEM OFF!

COMMANDER! THE ENEMIES HAD HIDDEN TROOPS OUTSIDE!

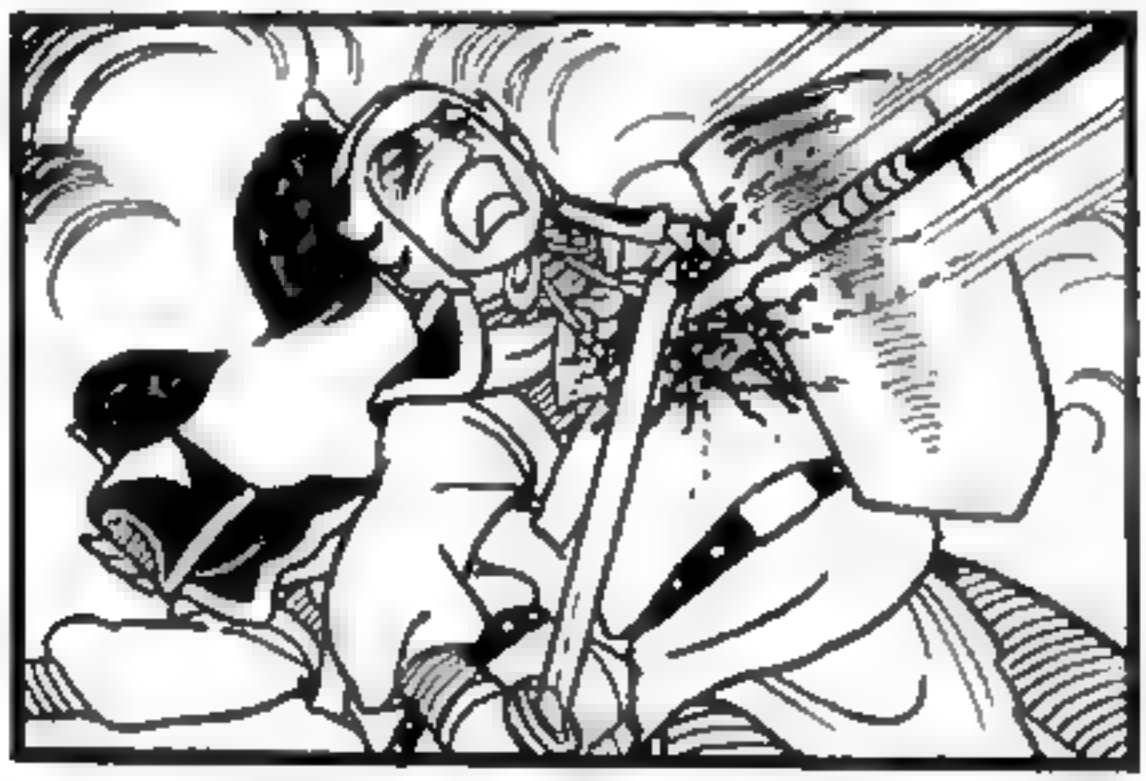
JUST THEN, THE FOUR GATES OF LUCHENG OPENED TO LET THE SHU GARRISON STORM OUTSIDE.

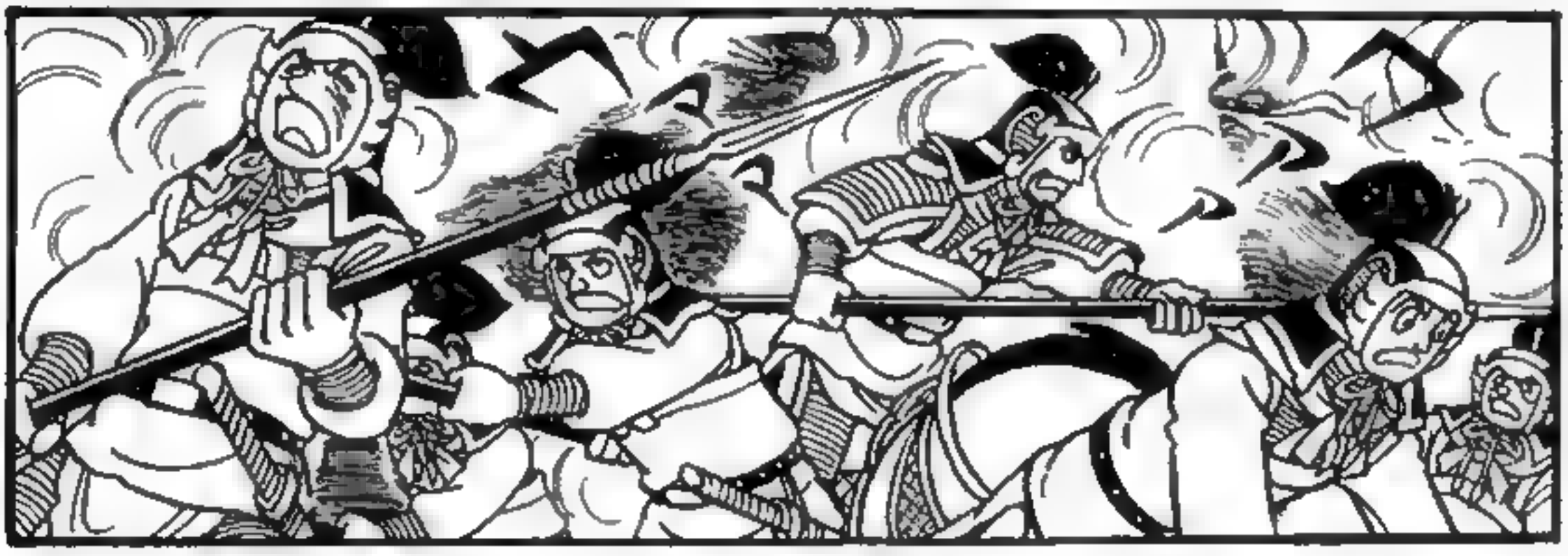
魏
魏
ATTACKED ON ALL SIDES, THE WEI ARMY QUICKLY FELL INTO DISORDER

R-RETREAT! RETREAT! THIS IS NO LONGER A BATTLE WE CAN WIN!



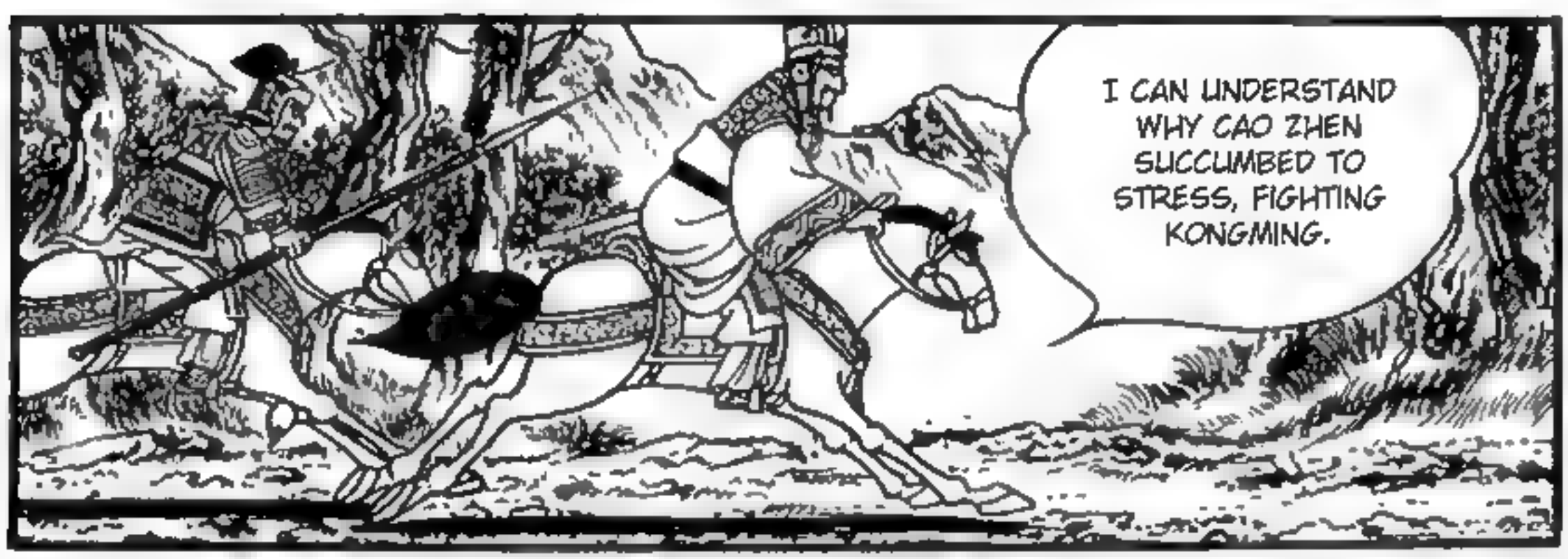
RIGHT.
PLEASE FLEE FROM HERE BEFORE THE ENEMY CAN SURROUND THIS POSITION AS WELL, COMMANDER!



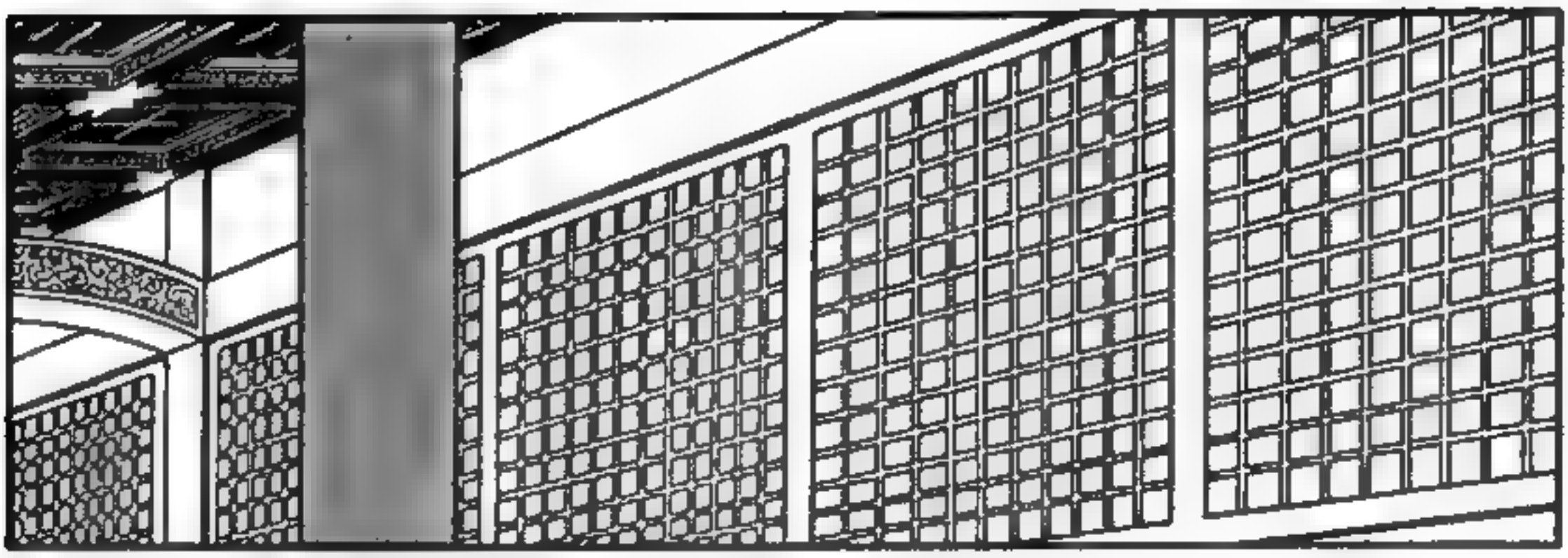


JUST HOW MANY STEPS IS KONGMING AHEAD OF ME...?

HOW CAN THIS BE...

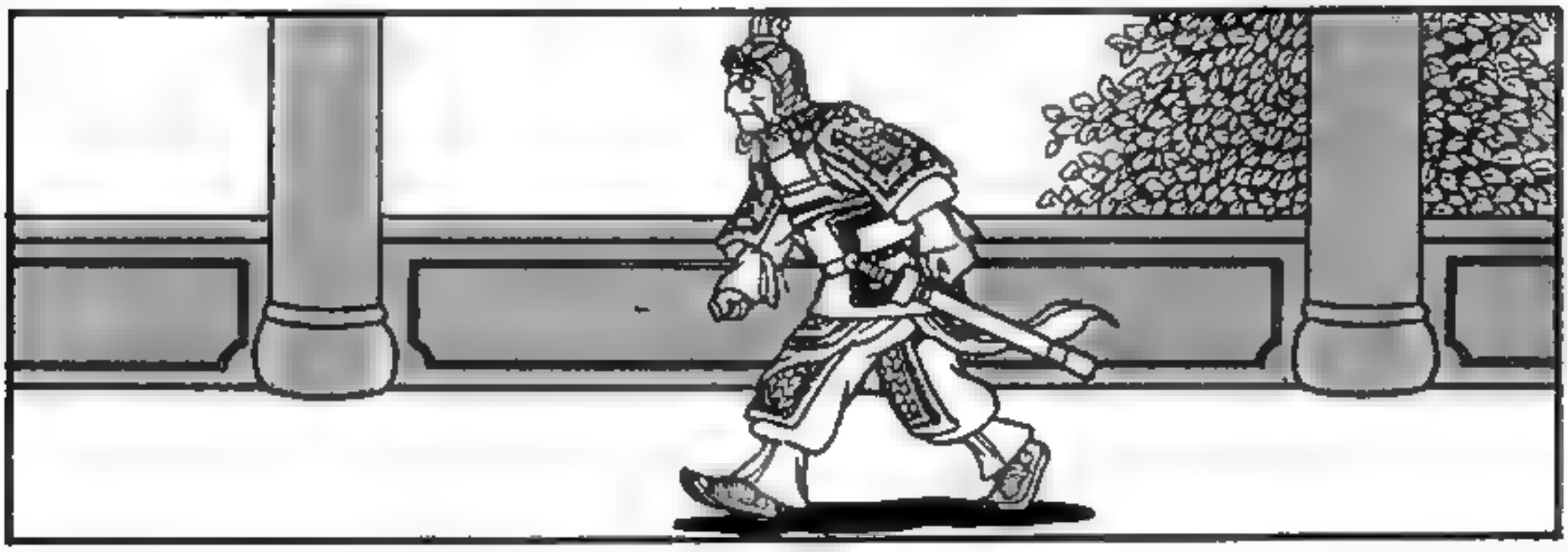

I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY CAO ZHEN SUCCUMBED TO STRESS, FIGHTING KONGMING.

AFTER THIS DISASTROUS ASSAULT ON LUCHENG, SIMA YI REMAINED ON THE DEFENSE AT SHANGGUI



THAT'S IT! WE WILL HAVE OUR FORCES IN YONG AND LIANG TO HELP WREST CONTROL SABER APSS FROM SHU, THEREBY CUTTING OFF THE ENEMY SUPPLY ROUTES TO LUCHENG! KONGMING WILL THEN BE LEFT ISOLATED IN LUCHENG AS HIS TROOPS SLOWLY STARVE!

HOW CAN KONGMING HANDILY DEFEAT US TIME AND TIME AGAIN, EVEN THOUGH WE OUTNUMBER HIS TROOPS!? ISN'T THERE ANY WAY WE CAN CRUSH HIM AT LAST...!?



YES, GUO HUAI?

COM-MANDER.

THE ENEMIES WILL ONLY CONSOLIDATE THEIR POSITION IF WE CONTINUE TO GLARE AT THEM FROM WITHIN OUR WALLS. WE MUST TAKE SOME SORT OF OFFENSIVE ACTION, OR SOON WE WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO EVEN RETREAT.

I MUST CONFESS THAT I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO SLEEP OUT OF FRUSTRATION.

YES, WE CALL UP 200,000 TROOPS FROM YONG AND LIAO TO FIRST WREST CONTROL OF SABER PASS BEFORE MAKING ANOTHER ATTACK ON LUCHENG.

AND DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING SPECIFIC TO SUGGEST?

YES, IF WE GAIN CONTROL OF THAT PASS, WE CAN CUT OFF THE ENEMY SUPPLY ROUTES TO LUCHENG, THEREBY TRAPPING THEM THERE!

ATTACK SABER PASS!?

I SEE.

AS KONGMING ORIGINALLY MARCHED OUT HERE IN NEED OF FOOD, HE WILL BE IN GRAVE TROUBLE ONCE WE CUT OFF HIS SUPPLY ROUTES!

OUR VICTORY WILL BE ASSURED WITH THIS PLAN.

VERY WELL, I WILL ASK YONGZHOU AND LIANGZHOU TO SEND THEIR TROOPS.

SIMA YI QUICKLY SENT A LETTER TO THE PROVINCES OF YONG AND LIANG
SOON, 200,000 WEI TROOPS LED BY SUN LI HEADED TO AID SIMA YI IN SHANGGUI.
孫礼

YES, THIS NEW FORCE IS SAID TO NUMBER 200,000.

WEI HAS TRANSFERRED ITS FORCES IN YONG AND LIANG TO HELP SIMA YI?

200,000... EVEN SIMA YI'S CURRENT FORCE ALREADY OUTNUMBERS US, AND NOW WE HAVE ANOTHER 200,000 TROOPS TO DEAL WITH...

IF HE'S SIMPLY STICKING TO DEFENSE, WHY WOULD HE CALL UP ANOTHER 200,000 TROOPS NOW...?

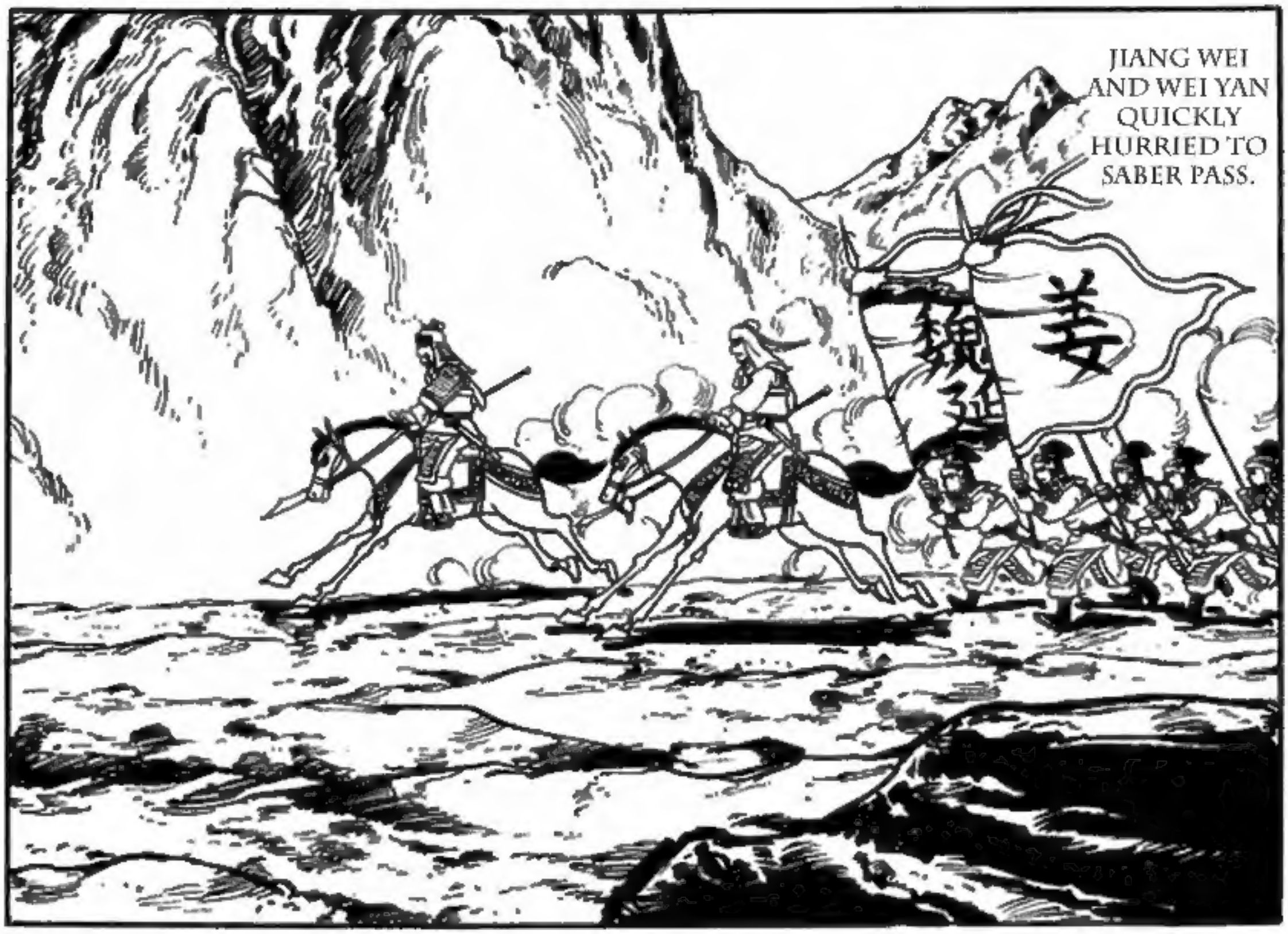
BUT THAT'S STRANGE. I THOUGHT SIMA YI HAD GONE BACK TO DEFENSE TO WAIT FOR US TO RUN OUT OF FOOD AGAIN.

JIANG WEI! WEI YAN!

AHH, OF COURSE!

YES, SIR!

THE ENEMIES ARE COMING TO ATTACK SABER PASS AND CUT OFF OUR SUPPLY ROUTE, THEREBY TRAPPING US HERE! EACH OF YOU WILL TAKE 10,000 TROOPS TO DEFEND SABER PASS!


JIANG WEI AND WEI YAN QUICKLY HURRIED TO SABER PASS.
魏延
姜

MEANWHILE, SUN LI AND HIS 200,000 TROOPS ARRIVED AT LAST IN SHANGGUI.

AS SHANGGUI COULD
NOT ACCOMODATE
THE HUNDREDS OF
THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS,
THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE
CITY BEYOND THE WALLS
WERE CROWDED WITH
MILITARY CAMPS.

TRANSLATED BY HOX

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三国志

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横山 光輝

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